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THE PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST
IN LAURENCE STERNE'S TRISTRAM SHANDY

BY

(C)

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A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1969



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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and
recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a
thesis entitled The Portrait of the Artist in Laurence Sterne's
"Tristram Shandy" submitted by Emelina B. Soriano in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

In this thesis I discuss the view of the artist and his craft as presented through the person of the self-conscious narrator, Tristram Shandy. I demonstrate how this presentation of the artist serves as a formative element in Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy, determining the characters, the language and the very structure of the work. Chapter I is a discussion of Tristram's self-consciousness as an artist. Chapter II deals with the different aspects of the creative process. The writer's medium of language and the writer-reader relationship are the subjects of the last two chapters.

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INTRODUCTION

The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, a fitting title for a serious autobiography, merely begins the series of tricks that Laurence Sterne plays on the reader in the novel, arousing in him expectations that will not be fulfilled. Tristram Shandy does not follow the usual format of a fictional autobiography, for, as critics delight in pointing out every so often, the hero is not born until the third volume of the nine volume work. Indeed more details about the lives of Tristram's father and uncle are revealed than about Tristram himself. But this is not to state that Laurence Sterne conceives of Tristram's role in the novel as negligible and unimportant.

On the contrary the opposite is quite firmly impressed on the reader's mind. In the twentieth chapter of Volume VI, Tristram Shandy, after dispensing one by one with the different characters he has been dealing with, eventually comes to himself -- and of himself he facetiously says, "Let us leave, if possible, myself: -- But 'tis impossible, -- I must go along with you to the end of the work" (VI, xx, 442). The exact nature of Tristram Shandy's role in the novel, and the reason for his insistence that "I must go along with you to the end of the work", are crucial to an understanding of the work and the recognition of Laurence Sterne's novelistic skill. Tristram Shandy's presence in the novel may be minimal in terms of the actual story-line but it is his story nevertheless, imbued with his presence as a writer. It is Tristram Shandy as

creating artist who dominates and forms the very structure of the work.

In this thesis I intend to show how the theme of the portrait of Tristram Shandy as artist prevails throughout the work and holds it together as structural device. I will be examining in particular Tristram's self-consciousness in his craft; the creative process, its elements and the different mirrors of it within the work; Tristram and the writer's medium of language; and finally, Tristram and the reader. In the discussion of these four topics the schematic form of Tristram Shandy comes to the fore, a system of situations and characters that constantly parallel and reflect each other in varying degrees, all revolving around the central situation of Tristram the creating artist.

The exploration of the theme of the portrait of an artist in Tristram Shandy not only reveals its inherent, well-integrated form which earlier critics denied it, showing the novel to be a tight organic work of art, but also points to its significance in the tradition of English literature since, in this eighteenth-century novel, Laurence Sterne treats of a theme that firmly establishes a bond between him and the twentieth-century experimental writers: James Joyce, Marcel Proust, and Dorothy Richardson.

CHAPTER I

TRISTRAM, THE SELF-CONSCIOUS ARTIST

O ye POWERS! (for powers ye are, and great ones too) -- which enable mortal man to tell a story worth the hearing, -- that kindly shew him, where he is to begin it, -- and where he is to end it, -- what he is to put into it, -- and what he is to leave out, -- how much of it he is to cast into shade, -- and whereabouts he is to throw his light!

(VIII, xxiii, 207)

Reading ~~more~~ like an excerpt from a writer's private journal ~~rather~~ than a part of a novel, paragraphs like this one abound in Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy and may be a source of puzzlement to the reader. To understand Tristram Shandy fully is to understand why such paragraphs dealing with a writer's artistic problems merit a place in the novel and why their function in the novel is of primary importance and interest.

Tristram Shandy is basically an account of Tristram Shandy the artist. Tristram, aside from providing the central point of view, also presents certain qualities in his role as narrator/writer that serve as structural devices integrating the novel and making all its aspects, digressions and progressions, cohere into a well-knit whole. A study of Tristram's function as artist as a thematic and formative element in the novel is in keeping with the successful efforts of twentieth-century critics to prove that the novel does not answer to the earlier, popular charge of formlessness.

Integral to Tristram's presentation of his life and opinions is his pose as a spontaneous narrator whose easy-going, con-

versational tone creates for the reader an immediacy of experience
 that easily belies the previously thought out structural elements in
 the novel. When Tristram visibly skips a chapter because it
 would have caused disharmony or juggles the order of chapters, the
 reader is tempted to think that he is dealing with a rough draft
 rather than a finished literary work. Tristram seemingly confirms
 the reader's first impression with statements like the following:
 Of all the several ways of beginning a book which are now in practice throughout the known world, I am confident my own way of doing it is the best -- I'm sure it is the most religious -- for I begin with writing the first sentence -- and trusting to Almighty God for the second.

(VIII, ii, 540)

However, for all his affectations of giving himself up to the inner deterrents to the production of a truly organized work, the urges and impulsiveness of his mind, and his acceptance of outer deterrents such as "the powers of time and chance, which severally check us in our career in this world" (IX, i, 599), there is a hidden order in what he produces. In exposing the limitations of his artistic craft, Tristram simultaneously displays what things are in his power.

Laurence Sterne uses Tristram Shandy as a vehicle to comment on the craft of the writer-artist and the theme of the portrait of the artist is dominant in the novel. Martin Price sees in Tristram Shandy the shift of attention from the embodied work to the energy of the artist, from the formed to the forming, from the creation to the immanent creator. Tristram Shandy as artist embodies all the problems and paradoxes of Laurence Sterne's vocation .

The process of evaluation underlies the whole novel, re-

flected in Yorick's habit of evaluating his sermons and Tristram's advertisement of his preface after judging it to merit nineteen points out of a perfect score of twenty. *Tristram Shandy* is constantly evaluating not only his skill in the craft of writing but the very craft itself. He examines the art as well as the artist, and the experience of writing becomes both subject and object in the book. As he unfolds his story, what he is writing about and his comments on the way he is writing it are interrelated and Sterne's skill is seen precisely in the relevance of one aspect to another, the enlargement of the reader's understanding of one in the context of the other. Even the actions within the novel and the action of writing a novel are closely paralleled and critic Christopher Ricks partially examines the relationship: the sermon drops from the book that Corporal Trim hands over to Uncle Toby in exactly the same way it drops from out of the story-line of the book, Dr. Slop's knotted bag represents Tristram's story with its multiplicity of round-about and intricate cross-turns, the frustrating of the story of the King of Bohemia is similar to the frustrating of Tristram's life and opinions originally promised to the reader.
3

Laurence Sterne employs Tristram as a self-conscious artist and through him simultaneously examines and makes use of the art of writing. Sterne and Tristram share the same vocation as writers but approach it differently. Tristram's re-creation through words of incidents that have actually happened to him and of people that he has actually known is, for him, a historical account based on facts of his life. Tristram approaches the writing experience as

a way of living the incidents he writes about, freely intermingling the movement of events with his narration of them, even allowing the latter to determine the former. Thus he calls in the chairman to get Uncle Toby and Walter Shandy off the stairs. Or else he asks that curtains be dropped over a particular scene or permits Elizabeth Shandy to be left standing unnaturally long at a keyhole. For Sterne, the story of Tristram is a piece of fiction, a novel for which he creates events, relationships and characters from his imagination. Tristram, his special creation, stands ironically opposed to him as artist as Sterne skilfully manipulates the story of a Tristram admitting the difficulties of handling the same material. Through Tristram's pose as a writer, Sterne explores the limitations of novelistic writing and bursts out of the set conventions of novelistic writing precisely to draw attention to them. The discrepancy between reality and the ability of literature to tackle it is intensified by Sterne through Tristram's choice of his personal experiences as the subject matter of his book.

Sterne through Tristram portrays the artist in the very act of creating and of utilizing literary techniques to recreate life. A literary work is ordered experience, arranged by an author to rank particular details, incidents or characters and presented to the reader as a finished product. Tristram brings the reader into the very process of ordering experience. The system of breaking up material in a novel into books and chapters helps the author handle his material, concretely signifies the ordering of experience that has taken place in the author's mind, a process that Tristram reveals to the reader when he says, "In the beginning of the last

chapter, I inform'd you exactly when I was born; -- but I did not inform you, how. No; that particular was reserved entirely for a chapter by itself" (I, vii, 10) and when he explains that his father's lamentation on Bobby's death deserves a chapter to itself. He starts off Volume II with an explanation of the necessity of such a division:

I Have begun a new book, on purpose that I might have room enough to explain the nature of the perplexities in which my uncle Toby was involved, from the many discourses and interrogations about the siege of Namur, where he received his wound.

(II, i, 81)

He opens to the reader the technique of staggering the presentation of material, reserving certain details for later chapters, as in the description of Mrs. Wadman's attacks, of which he says, "it will be time enough to be a little more exact in my descriptions of them, as I come up to them, which will not be for some chapters" (VIII, xviii, 556). This calling attention to the use of divisions in a literary work, providing even a chapter on chapters, is Tristram Shandy explaining a device of his art, creating two levels of perception in the reader's mind, one of the story proper, the other of the device and how it functions in relation to the story. At the same time that he alerts the reader's mind to divisions within his work, Tristram also insists on the harmony that must exist among the chapters and speaks of how he "tortures" a chapter so that it may be of service to the chapter following it (VIII, vi, 545).

To best approximate the writing experience Tristram affects the pose of a writer in the very act of writing. No part of the book seems to have been rewritten. Complaints about his own inefficiency as a writer and the progress of his work remain intact in the novel, which he never seems to have bothered to correct. In

Volume VI he rewrites a faulty chapter but includes both the faulty and rewritten versions in the novel. Tristram feigns lack of control of his material as he states that he is totally at a loss or that somehow or other, he has got thrust almost into the middle of the story without his realizing it.

Tristram guides the writer in an examination of the art of writing not in the form of a writer's finished work but in the form of the writer's mental activity preceding the production of such a work. He discusses the proposed chapters, setting forth the pros and cons that arise in his mind regarding particular topics, bringing out the inner decisions he has to make before actually writing:

- - I have this chapter to put to whatever use I think proper - - I have twenty this moment ready for it - - I could write my chapter of Button-holes in it - -

Or my chapter of Pishes, which should follow them - -

Or my chapter of Knots, in case their reverences have done with them - -

(IX, xiv, 617)

Bringing to the fore processes of writing ordinarily hidden by the writer, Tristram makes his creation both a work of and regarding art. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in his discussion of characterization. Before giving a character sketch of Uncle Toby, he first gives a cursory survey of different techniques of characterization, evaluating each and then finally deciding on his own invention, the hobby-horsical method, one which he seriously follows; for when Tristram discovers that he wants to present a quality of Uncle Toby that does not fit into this method, he warns the reader about his deviation.

The tone of immediacy is further intensified by his posturing of inability, especially before he gets to particularly important parts of the work. Before dealing with the Widow Wadman affair, Tristram

complains:

Though I have all along been hastening towards this part of it, with so much earnest desire, as well knowing it to be the choicest morsel of what I had to offer to the world, yet now that I am got to it, any one is welcome to take my pen, and go on with the story for me that will - - I see the difficulties of the descriptions I'm going to give - - and feel my want of powers.

(IX, xxiv, 627)

In another instance he declares himself perplexed by the movement of his story when he finds himself talking of two journeys instead of one.

Throughout Tristram Shandy the reader feels that he is reading about a writer in his first confrontation with his material.

Being a first confrontation, the element of Tristram Shandy's reactions to his material and his management of it is very important in the novel. He seems to consider it an obligation to render the truth to his reader and he introduces the story of Yorick with the statement, "I would not shake my credit in telling an improbable truth, however indisputable in itself" (I, xi, 23). Thus he annotates the story of his conception, announcing his indebtedness to Uncle Toby. He insists on going to the primary source when telling of his parents' agreement about lying-in in London. But as a writer highly conscious of his art, he also constantly reminds his reader that he is dealing with a mere representation of reality, an illusion that Tristram Shandy has sewn rather clumsily, with seams showing where they are not supposed to show, seams that Tristram thoroughly enjoys pointing out.

Everything is part of his plan to expose his craft. Instead of letting the story take a natural course, he rudely interrupts it to announce a flashback: in the incident of Bobby's death, after a digression on Obadiah, the mule and his father's eloquence, he decides

that the movement of the story must be changed and accordingly stops everything with his statement, "Now let us go back to my brother's death" (V, iii, 353). In both cases he makes the presence of the author strongly felt by allowing the story to move only after external interference of the author.

The reader is always made conscious of Tristram's own reactions to his story-telling experience. Part of the novel is Tristram's evaluation of his own work and his progress as a writer: he congratulates himself on the use of good metaphors on several occasions, or else scolds himself for certain faults, calling himself a babbler for anticipating a subject far too many times thus destroying the element of suspense, and blaming himself for being inefficient and neglecting to let Trim tell the story of Le Fever. He is aware of the movement of his story and responsive to its needs, desisting from telling about Uncle Toby's wound too early because it "would be running my history all upon heaps to give it you here" (I, xxi, 67), or deciding to let "a good quantity of heterogeneous matter be inserted, to keep up that just balance betwixt wisdom and folly, without which a book would not hold together a single year" (IX, xii, 614). After six volumes have been written he decides to illustrate the movement of each so that he can accordingly improve the coming volumes.

Exposing the techniques of his craft also includes exposing its inherent limitations and because of his pose as an erratic and undisciplined writer, Tristram's exposure becomes more pronounced. Whereas other novelists attempt to hide or to override the limitations of their craft, Tristram does not hesitate to let the public view

then, juxtaposed with his story. But with Tristram's exposure of the limitations of his craft is a concomitant exploitation of the limitations to work for the author's good.

There is the problem of language, the writer's medium, glimpsed in the story of the midwife when Tristram carefully defines the word "world" with the statement "by which word world, need I in this place inform your worship, that I would be understood to mean no more of it, than a small circle described upon the circle of the great world, of four English miles diameter, or thereabouts, of which the cottage where the good old woman lived, is supposed to be the centre" (I, vii, 11). Several chapters later, he admonishes the reader not to forget the definition he has given the word as he says, "In the present case, if I remember, I fixed it at about four or five miles" (I, xiii, 35). The trickiness of words is again brought out in the story of the beginnings of Uncle Toby's hobby-horse when Tristram comments that writers, just like his Uncle Toby, are often prone to confuse the different meanings of words. The problem of language will be discussed more comprehensively in a later chapter.

There is also the problem of what direction to take in the telling of a story, brought out in Tristram's indecision with regards to the placement of the story of the bridge, whether it should be included with the story of Uncle Toby's amours, the story of Uncle Toby's campaigns, or whether it should be explained right at that point of the narrative when Trim tells Walter Shandy that Dr. Slop is in the kitchen building a bridge. Histrionically Tristram pleads:

I beg and beseech you, (in case you will do nothing better for us) that wherever, in any part of your dominions it so falls out, that three several roads meet in one point, as they have done just here, - - that

at least you set up a guide-post, in the center of them, in mere charity to direct an uncertain devil, which of the three he is to take.

(III, xxiii, 207)

The problem of what direction to take is closely related to the problem of time which has been considerably investigated by critics⁴ and will thus be examined only in one particular aspect, the problem of language in the context of time. The inability of narrative structure to contain time as it exists in reality is expressed by A. A. Men-dilow as "the inevitable conflict that must arise when a consecutive 'horizontal' time-form is used to express simultaneity of impression and the 'vertical' sense of the process of living."⁵

The movement of the novel can never parallel the movement of time in real life; and in a near hysterical fit, Tristram discourses on his inability to cope with this 'vertical' sense:

My mother, you must know, - - but I have fifty things more necessary to let you know first, - - I have a hundred difficulties which I have promised to clear up, and a thousand distresses and domestic misadventures crowding in upon me thick and three-fold, one upon the neck of another, - - a cow broke in (to-morrow morning) to my uncle Toby's fortifications, and eat up two ratios and a half of dried grass, tearing up the sods with it, which faced his horn-work and covered way. - - Trim insists upon being tried by a court-martial, - - the cow to be shot, - - Slop to be crucifix'd, - - myself to be tristram'd, and at my very baptism made a martyr of; - - poor unhappy devils that we all are! - - I want swaddling, - - but there is no time to be lost in exclamations. - - I have left my father lying across his bed, and my uncle Toby in his old fringed chair, sitting beside him, and promised I would go back to them in half an hour, and five and thirty minutes are laps'd already. - - Of all the perplexities a mortal author was ever seen in, - - this certainly is the greatest, - - for I have Hafen Slawkenbergius's folio, Sir, to finish - - a dialogue between my father and my uncle Toby, upon the solution of Prignitz, Scroderus, Ambrose Paraeus, Ponocrates and Grangousier to relate, - - a tale out of Slawkenbergius to translate, and all this in five minutes less, than no time at all; - - such a head! - - would to heaven! my enemies only saw the inside of it!

(III, xxxviii, 235)

There is, of course, his famous outcry:

I am this month one whole year older than I was this time twelve-month;

and having got, as you perceive, almost into the middle of my fourth volume - - and no farther than to my first day's life - - 'tis demonstrative that I have three hundred and sixty-four days more life to write just now, than when I first set out; so that instead of advancing, as a common writer, in my work with what I have been doing at it - - on the contrary, I am just thrown so many volumes back - - was every day of my life to be as busy a day as this - - And why not? - - and the transactions and opinions of it to take up as much description - - And for what reason should they be cut short? as at this rate I should just live 364 times faster than I should write - - It must follow, can't please your worships, that the more I write, the more I shall have to write - - and consequently, the more your worships read, the more your worships will have to read.

(IV, xiii, 285-86)

Tristram's outcries against time do not arise from the simple problem of a prolific writer having too many things to say and not enough time to say them. The problem lies in the very existence of language in time. Just as the reader discovers only upon examination the existence of formative elements in the novel, he has to undertake another careful examination to discover that a definite, chronological time scheme exists beneath the intentional jumble of time that Tristram presents.⁶

Tristram sees the unreasonableness of expecting events in life to follow a strict, chronological order. Indeed part of his upsetting of narrative convention is his rather perverse delight in going backwards and forwards, backtracking only to retrace his steps, seeming to circle about the events rather than neatly telling each incident and getting it out of the way. He does this in an attempt to record the complexity of life accurately at the same time that he obstinately insists on the impossibility of such an undertaking because of the relationship between language and time.

Language exists in time and as such, possesses a chronological nature. Words are sequential and can never hope to approximate

simultaneous experience. The chronological nature of language prevents it from presenting experience as it truly is and the writer has to rely on the reader's suspension of disbelief as he recounts two simultaneous events one after the other. Tristram teasingly leads the reader to leave all such suspension behind him as he intentionally burlesques and exposes the inability of language to overcome its nature.

One way he presents this to the reader is by leaving certain characters in static poses while going off to follow the adventures of another. He leaves his mother with her ears to the door with the explanation: "In this attitude I am determined to let her stand for five minutes: till I bring up the affairs of the kitchen (as Rapin does those of the church) to the same period" (V, v, 357-58). Six chapters later he confesses that he nearly forgets all about her, "I Am a Turk if I had not as much forgot my mother, as if Nature had plaistered me up, and set me down naked upon the banks of the river Nile, without one" (V, xi, 367). It is already difficult to handle time within the story itself among the actions of the different characters.

The difficulty is compounded when the dimension of the author's - that is, Tristram's - writing time is added to that of the story itself. He points out the difference between the two time dimensions by interrupting the story so that he as author can occupy the stage. At one point he stops Uncle Toby in the middle of a sentence and does not let him finish it until he has given his character sketch. At another he leaves his father on the bed and his Uncle Toby in his old fringed chair beside him for half an hour

while he assumes his duties as narrator and explains the significance of noses in Walter Shandy's life. The visual effect of characters freezing in their positions in suspended animation, a familiar theatrical device, so that Tristram as narrator can occupy the stage, is intensified by Tristram's favorite expression of dropping the curtain over a particular scene. He does this during the conversation among Dr. Slop, Uncle Toby, and Walter Shandy so that he can remind the reader of one thing and inform him of another. He does the same thing to Uncle Toby and Walter descending the stairs so that he can write his chapter on chapters. There is too the dimension of the reader's reading time discussed by Tristram in the incident of Dr. Slop's coming when he facetiously insists on the compatibility of reading time and the time of the story, deciding that an hour and a half's time of good reading corresponds "poetically" to the time of Obadiah's going for Doctor Slop and his return (II, viii, 103).

For all Tristram's recognition of the limitations of his craft he does not cease to demonstrate the author's control of material within the limitations set by language and time. The author still exerts considerable control. In fact Tristram points out to his reader that the discrepancy between story time, reading time and writing time allows him to handle his material more effectively:

I would, therefore, desire him to consider that it is but poor eight miles from Shandy-Hall to Dr. Slop, the man midwife's house; - - and that whilst Obadiah has been going those said miles and back, I have brought my uncle Toby from Namur, quite across all Flanders, into England: - - That I have had him ill upon my hands near four years; - - and have since travelled him and Corporal Trim, in a chariot and four, a journey of near two hundred miles down into Yorkshire.

(II, viii, 103-4)

Once more the inevitable discrepancy comes in handy when Tristram is able to dismiss the time span of years in a few words so that he can tell his story better:

I Am so impatient to return to my own story, that what remains of young Le Fever's, that is, from this turn of his fortune, to the time my uncle Toby recommended him for my own preceptor, shall be told in a very few words, in the next chapter.

(VI, xi, 426)

Tristram the artist, for all his affected complaints of his lack of discipline and the difficulty of his craft, masters it and exploits its limitations to work to his credit. His analysis of his own art, done jocularly and all in good fun, nevertheless betrays a purposeful attempt to help both himself and primarily the reader to understand it better.

In the Proustian manner but without the Proustian seriousness Tristram integrates the story-line with the presentation of his personality as an artist so that the reader becomes acquainted not only with the literary theories that guide him in his writing of his life and opinions but also with the translation of these theories into his novelistic creation. A playful tone results from Tristram's characteristic twist of pretending to take himself seriously only to make fun of himself in the very next sentence. The mood of seriousness and sentimentality that pervades Tristram's description of the death of Le Fever is rudely broken by his query to the reader:

Nature instantly ebb'd again, - - the film returned to its place, - - the pulse fluttered - - stopp'd - - went on - - throb'd - - stopp'd again - - moved - - stopp'd - - shall I go on? No.

(VI, x, 426)

He makes use of the same techniques in the discussion of his craft:

Never do I hit upon any invention or device which tendeth to the furtherance of good writing, but I instantly make it public; willing that all mankind should write as well as myself.

- - Which they certainly will, when they think as little.

(IX, xii, 615)

The levity produced by this playful tone may mislead the reader into thinking that Tristram is all fun and frolic. Tristram certainly succeeds in maintaining a consistently facetious tone but he does not hesitate to hint at the fact that pure facetiousness is not his intent. He asks the reader "to courteously give me credit for a little more wisdom than appears upon my outside" (I, vii, 11).

He has written his book so that it can be taken seriously too and he points this out when he scolds the lady reader for her careless reading, giving his reason thus:

- - 'Tis to rebuke a vicious taste which has crept into thousands besides herself, - - of reading straight forwards, - - more in the quest of the adventures, than of the deep erudition and knowledge which a book of this cast, if read over as it should be, would infallibly impart with them. - - The mind should be accustomed to make wise reflections, and draw curious conclusions as it goes along; the habitude of which made Pliny the younger affirm, "That he never read a book so bad, but he drew some profit from it."

(I, xx, 56-7)

The artist constitutes the dominant part of Tristram's personality and of the novel itself, for Tristram's theories on his craft are not only contained in the novel but are carried out in its very structure. He verbally declares his admiration every so often for particular literary antecedents when he says, "By the tomb stone of Lucian - - if it is in being, - - if not, why then, by his ashes! by the ashes of my dear Rabelais, and dearer Cervantes" (III, xix, 191), and when he writes his invocation to the muse "who erst didst sit upon the easy pen of my beloved CERVANTES" (IX, xxiv, 628). The form of Tristram's work is a structural declaration of the same admiration. Characters are described as being of Cervantick cast and relationships among characters are reminiscent of Cervantes. In particular passages the language is in direct imitation of Rabelais.⁷

Inspite of his heavy borrowings from other writers Tristram in the very first volume says with conviction, "I shall confine myself neither to his rules, nor to any man's rules that ever lived" (I, iv, 8), a statement which he echoes in the last volume when he says, "All I wish is, that it may be a lesson to the world, 'to let people tell their stories their own way'" (IX, xxv, 633). He seems to be conscious of the uniqueness of his task, the special methods he has to employ to embody effectively his chosen material. As a writer commenting on the art of writing in the context of his own experience as a writer, he brings the reader into closer contact with the artist as a person, with the artistic process of working out literary beliefs into a fictional creation. Thus, he has no qualms about stating the purpose of his book: If 'tis wrote against any thing, - - 'tis wrote, an' please your worships, against the spleen; in order, by a more frequent and and a more convulsive elevation and depression of the diaphragm, and the succussions of the intercostal and abdominal muscles in laughter, to drive the gall and other bitter juices from the gall bladder, liver and sweet-bread of his majesty's subjects, with all the inimicitous passions which belong to them, down into their duodenums.

(IV, xxii, 301-2)

Tristram's belief that "writing, when properly managed, (as you may be sure I think mine is) is but a different name for conversation" and thus "the truest respect which you can pay to the reader's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself" (II, xi, 108-9) results in his anticipation of the reader's reactions to his work. Reactions come sometimes in the form of questions which he supposes the reader to have regarding incidents in the story, the most known example of which comes in the first volume, "Did ever woman, since the creation of the world, interrupt a man with such a silly question?

Pray, what was your father saying? -- Nothing" (I, i, 5). On other occasions he attributes to the reader an interest in and reactions to the way he handles his craft, and so he carefully puts forth his philosophy of digressions and justifies his longwindedness. He puts a hasty end to chapter three of Volume II for fear of boring the reader and still, in consideration for the reader, explains a particular way of ending a chapter. He even willingly opens the plan of his work to the reader, letting him know what to expect as he says, "You will read the whole of it -- not this year, for I am hastening to the story of my uncle Toby's amours" (VII, xlivi, 536).

Tristram's comparison of writers to cabbage planters because of the inability of both to go on "coolly, critically, and canonically . . . without ever and anon straddling out, or sidling into some bastardly digression" (VIII, i, 539) illustrates his strict defiance of a strict chronological sequence for his creation. His constant digressions in fact have convinced many readers of the formlessness of his work. What these readers ignore, however, is the chapter that Tristram devotes to digressions, which he calls "the sunshine . . . the life, the soul of reading" (I, xxii, 73). There he presents the image of his work as a machine as he explains, "the machinery of my work is of a species by itself; two contrary motions are introduced into it, and reconciled, which were thought to be at variance with each other" (I, xxii, 73). The picture of two contrary motions that are introduced and reconciled is an apt representation of the conflict that digressions bring into the otherwise chronological story he sets out to tell, making it more difficult for him to handle his material. To proceed with his metaphor of the reconciliation of the two contrary motions is to realize an aspect of

Tristram's structural technique, that he goes backwards and forwards as he pleases within his work but only in such a way that in the final analysis, his progressions and digressions form an integrated whole.

The cabbage planter produces a neat cabbage patch in the end no matter how many digressions he makes. In the same way, Tristram Shandy, although the movement of his story may prove hectic and utterly awry at times, also produces an organized piece whose parts do fit in and work effectively with each other, particularly when viewed from the thematic perspective of the artist in the novel.

CHAPTER II

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

In a letter to Isaac Panchaud dated November 25, 1766, Laurence Sterne writes, "I am going to ly in of another child of the Shandaick procreation, in town - - I hope you wish me a safe delivery."¹ Using similar imagery he tells William Combe in a letter dated January 7 or 9, 1767, "I miscarried of my tenth Volume by the violence of a fever, I have just got thro' - - I have however gone on to my reckoning with the ninth, (in) of w^{ch} I am all this week in Labour pains; and if to Day's Advertiser is to be depended upon shall be safely deliver'd by tuesday."² Laurence Sterne's own representation of the mental creative act in imagery and terms that depict the physical creative act is shared by the self-conscious narrator of his novel. Thus Tristram describes the fate of one of his father's creative attempts in the following manner:

Here a devil of a rap at the door snapp'd my father's definition (like his tobacco-pipe) in two, - - and, at the same time, crushed the head of as notable and curious addissertation as ever was engendered in the womb of speculation; - - it was some months before my father could get an opportunity to be safely deliver'd of it.

(II, vii, 102-3)

This representation of the mental creative act in imagery and terms depicting the physical creative act in fact serves as a recurring theme of Tristram Shandy which, unless seen in the proper context, can be mistaken for nothing but a reflection of Tristram's salacious mind.

At first reading the profusion of sexual imagery and terms in Tristram Shandy may seem purposeless. But the mere fact of their profusion hints at their importance in the work. Tristram Shandy seems to be very conscious of a close connection between the physical and mental levels, a result perhaps of Laurence Sterne's personal situation where poor health, in a sense, forced him to think of mental activity as totally dependent on physical health. Thus Tristram says, "A Man's body and his mind, with the utmost reverence to both I speak it, are exactly like a jerkin, and a jerkin's lining; -- rumple the one -- you rumple the other" (III, iv, 160). He expresses his belief that the strange irregularity of the English climate produces the strange irregularity of the English people. Wit and judgement are directly influenced by weather. Walter Shandy's prostration on his bed upon the discovery of the accidental flattening of his son's nose is carefully described in order to put across the full impact of his sorrows. For Tristram the contents of his writing are also dependent on physical facts. He attests to the cleanliness of his book through evidence given by his laundry bills, for he believes that "a man cannot dress, but his ideas get cloath'd at the same time; and if he dresses like a gentleman, every one of them stands presented to his imagination, genteelized along with him -- so that he has nothing to do, but take his pen, and write like himself" (IX, xiii, 616-7). Even Tristram's physical composure changes according to the kind of material his mind is working on at a particular moment:

I enter upon this part of my story in the most pensive and melancholy frame of mind, that ever sympathetic breast was touched with. -- My nerves relax as I tell it. -- Every line I write, I

feel an abatement of the quickness of my pulse, and of that careless alacrity with it, which every day of my life prompts me to say and write a thousand things I should not. - - And this moment that I last dipp'd my pen into my ink, I could not help taking notice what a cautious air of sad composure and solemnity there appear'd in my manner of doing it. - - Lord! how different from the rash jerks, and harebrain'd squirts thou art wont, Tristram! to transact it with in other humours, - - dropping thy pen, - - spurting thy ink about thy table and thy books, - - as if thy pen and thy ink, thy books and thy furniture cost thee nothing.

(III, xxviii, 215)

Tristram is not the only character who draws a connecting line between the physical and the mental. There is Walter Shandy's firm belief in intelligence being lodged in a delicate and fine-spun web of the brain that must be carefully protected during the process of childbirth. Uncle Toby mistakes love for a blister in his "nethermost part" which develops as a result of a horseride, and only realizes it is not when "the blister breaking in the one case - - and the other remaining - - my uncle Toby was presently convinced, that his wound was not a skin-deep-wound - - but that it had gone to his heart" (VIII, xxvi, 580). Other experiences of Uncle Toby point to the same conclusion, for the perplexities he undergoes in trying to describe the story of his wound physically incapacitate him. Yorick uses imagery characteristic of Tristram in describing the composition of a sermon, "I was delivered of it at the wrong end of me" (IV, xxvi, 317).

The consciousness of the close relation between the physical and the mental leads Tristram to introduce his story of the creation of his book with the creation of himself by his parents. The strong sexual motif in Tristram Shandy which doubtless has made many critics, especially those of Victorian vintage,

shrink away from the book, has been reasonably explained. A. R. Towers sees an analogy between the lack of communication among the Shandeans and the sexual impotence characteristic of the Shandean male (most vividly exemplified in Walter Shandy), because the sexual act is, among other things, an attempt to communicate at the ³ most elemental level. With the same idea of communication Sigurd Burkhardt sees the sexual innuendo as a metaphor for the unmentionable mystery of the word, as an expression for the "unmentionable" in the literal sense, for what cannot be said except ⁴ by indirection.

Over and above the significance seen in the sexual element as an analogue of the communication problem is the basic task it performs ~~in emphasizing~~ the process of creation that is the concern of the novel. Dorothy Van Ghent notes that Laurence Sterne's project, like Marcel Proust's, was to analyze and represent ⁵ in his novel the creative process. In his attempt to do so through the persona of Tristram Shandy, Laurence Sterne ~~relies~~ heavily on the use of the physical creative process as a constant parallel to and oftentimes a determining factor in the mental creative process.

The main creative act in the novel is that of Tristram writing a book and within the plot of Tristram Shandy are found mirrors of this central act, reflections that amplify the theme of Tristram as creating artist and also hint at certain aspects of Tristram's vocation. Tristram's role of creator is shared by almost all the other characters in one form or another. Each is a crea-

tor and Tristram emphasizes everyone's "creative" aspect by constantly juxtaposing it with elements of physical creativity, human sexuality. This is very evident in the way Tristram links his limitations as a writer to his pair of breeches, referring to his unexpected circumcision at the age of five when he laments his inability to describe Trim skilfully and says, "O Trim! would to heaven thou had'st a better historian! -- would! -- thy historian had a better pair of breeches! -- O ye criticks, will nothing melt you?" (V, vi, 359).

Perhaps the most notable juxtaposition in the novel is the use of physical impotence which characterizes the Shandean male as an indication, a suitable objectification of the difficulties inherent in the task of a creator. Diseases and physical mishaps are dangerously centered around the male sexual organ. Walter Shandy suffers from neuralgia of the hip and the thigh, Uncle Toby from a wound in the groin and Trim from a wound in the knee. Tristram himself, the most fully developed representation of the artist in the novel, does not fare any better. The accidental flattening of his nose merely augurs the accidental circumcision he undergoes.

Their attitudes towards the marital act are also indicators of Shandean impotence. Walter Shandy blatantly announces his dislike of it in the way he schedules it as a once-a-month ordeal and in his statement in a conversation:

--Brother Shandy, answer'd my uncle Toby, looking wistfully in his face, -- you are much mistaken in this point; -- for you do increase my pleasure very much, in begetting children for the Shandy family at your time of life. -- But, by that, Sir, quoth Dr. Slop, Mr. Shandy increases his own. -- Not a jot, quoth my father.

(II, xii, 115)

Tristram leaves no doubt about Uncle Toby's virility although he does stress his long abstinence and in typical Shandaick humor gives a description of Uncle Toby's leg that can apply to more than just his leg:

My uncle Toby's leg was not emaciated at all. It was a little stiff and awkward, from a total disuse of it, for the three years he lay confined at my father's house in town; but it was plump and muscular, and in all other respects as good and promising a leg as the other.

(VIII, vi, 545)

Tristram's interest in whiskers, green-gowns, buttonholes, old hats and knots are indicative of his interest in the creative act, physical as representative of the mental, but his own physical well-being does not quite live up to his interest. He hints ambiguously at his impotence and at what does not happen between Jenny and himself.

The women characters in Tristram Shandy set off as in a relief the varying degrees of impotence that paralyze the males since they are all healthy and potent, from Susannah who dreams of green-gowns to the Widow Wadman who kicks off her homemade chastity belt on the third night after she meets Uncle Toby. The Widow Wadman in her desire to have a well-balanced married life parodies Walter Shandy in her search for truth, reading Drake, Wharton and Groof and finally asking Dr. Slop for his definition of "recovery" in terms of Uncle Toby. Susannah makes use of double meanings in most of her conversations, all of them bawdy, the prime example being the window sash incident when she screams, "Nothing is left, . . . nothing is left- - for me, but to run my country" (V, xvii, 376). Mrs. Wadman, while entertaining Uncle Toby, "looked down,

upon a slit she had been darning up in her apron" (IX, xviii, 633).

Sexual images surround the women in Tristram Shandy so definitely that even Elizabeth Shandy's fascination for keyholes becomes suspect.

The question of whether Tristram Shandy is Laurence Sterne has often been raised and perhaps the only way to answer it is to say that though Tristram is always Sterne, Sterne is not always Tristram. Indeed Sterne seems to need more than Tristram to embody himself and the different characters all share Sternean qualities in varying degrees. The outstanding Sternean quality is of course the artistic aspect and Tristram Shandy in his recounting of his life and opinions presents the different Shandeans in their pose as creators, emphasizing the pose by surrounding them with a sexually-charged and sometimes sexually-uncharged atmosphere. Yorick finds himself devoting his time "to the child-bearing and child-getting part of his parish; reserving nothing for the impotent" (I, x, 21), while on the opposite extreme the Shandy men are sexually deficient in one way or another. A study of the creative aspect of the important characters in Tristram Shandy reveals certain facets of the processes of creation and the qualities of creators which, although facetiously presented, are probably parts of Sterne's personal artistic creed.

The care that must go into the creation of anything is the first point that Tristram hints at, starting off his re-creation of his life with a wish about his actual conception:

I Wish either my father or my mother, or indeed both of them, as they were in duty both equally bound to it, had minded what they were about when they begot me; had they duly consider'd how much depended upon what they were then doing; - - that not only the production of a rational Being was concern'd in it, but that possibly the happy formation and temperature of his body, perhaps his genius and the

very cast of his mind; - - and, for aught they knew to the contrary, even the fortunes of his whole house might take their turn from the humours and dispositions which were then uppermost: - - Had they duly weighed and considered all this, and proceeded accordingly, - - I am verily persuaded I should have made a quite different figure in the world, from that, in which the reader is likely to see me.

(I, i, 4)

The dimension that Tristram adds to terms referring to human procreation so that they extend to the mental germination of ideas and the working of these into words points to the enlargement of the scope of this first paragraph to mean the conception of the whole work. In effect he starts off his re-creation at the very moment of its conception in his mind, in a term he borrows from Horace, ab Ovo.

An intricate series of parallels and correspondences is integral to the structure of Tristram Shandy. One critic calls it a system of wheels within wheels.⁶ As the novel progresses, several levels proceed, sometimes merging with each other in similar aspects, each highlighting the qualities of the others. This is particularly evident in an analysis of the processes of creation that take place throughout the novel.

Tristram, like the act of writing, is both subject and object in the work. On the physical level he is created; on the artistic level he is re-creator of his own created self. His situation is clarified when its relationship to the various creative processes in the work is examined.

The manner of presentation of Tristram Shandy reveals that the different creations of the Shandeans are strikingly alike and this is brought about through situation and language. Misfortune seems to attend every creative process. On the physical level the idea of

creator and creation is best embodied in the union of Walter and Elizabeth Shandy and even on this level the accidents that occur are manifold. Tristram has to be born in the country because his mother miscalculates her own condition and goes to London without sufficient reason. The night of the actual conception is disrupted by Elizabeth Shandy's impertinent question and Dr. Slop's knotted bag adds to the confusion on the night of the delivery. Tristram's nose is inadvertently flattened during the delivery and the christening ceremony becomes disastrous when he is mis-named. His unexpected circumcision at the age of five and the inability of Walter Shandy to write the *Tristram-Paedia* fast enough to be beneficial for Tristram add to the haphazardness of any attempt to control and predict the conception, birth and growth of Tristram.

Analogues of the movement of Tristram's physical conception and growth can be found in the other creations. Foremost is Tristram's complaint of his progress as a writer. He too cannot predict or control the movement of his story, for as a writer "he knows no more than his heels what lets and confounded hinderances he is to meet with in his way, -- or what a dance he may be led, by one excursion or another, before all is over" (I, xiv, 36). The scattering of the animal spirits caused by Elizabeth Shandy's untimely question parallels the loss of the story of the king of Bohemia between Trim and Uncle Toby because of Uncle Toby's persistent questioning, which in turn is a microcosmic version of the movement of Tristram's story. It is Trim's undue attention to Uncle Toby's reactions and

comments that aborts the story, as is evident from Trim's very first attempt:

THERE was a certain king of Bo - - he -----

As the corporal was entering the confines of Bohemia, my uncle Toby obliged him to halt for a single moment; he had set out bare-headed, having since he pull'd off his Montero-cap in the latter end of the last chapter, left it lying beside him on the ground.

- - The eye of Goodness espieth all things - - so that before the corporal had well got through the first five words of his story, had my uncle Toby twice touch'd his Montero-cap with the end of his cane, interrogatively - - as much as to say, Why don't you put it on, Trim? Trim took it up with the most respectful slowness, and casting a glance of humiliation as he did it, upon the embroidery of the fore-part, which being dismally tarnish'd and fray'd moreover in some of the principal leaves and boldest parts of the pattern, he lay'd it down again betwixt his two feet, in order to moralize upon the subject.

(VIII, xix, 560)

Tristram's extreme concern for his reader also determines the movement of his story as he digresses from it to explain certain relevant details, as he manipulates his material to satisfy the reader's expectations or as he attempts to anticipate and follow the reader's moods. Trim never gets to tell the story of the king of Bohemia in his desire to please Uncle Toby but instead ends up telling him about his love affair with the Beguine. Tristram too, in his supposed autobiography, devotes more time to events that take place before his birth and ends up telling more stories about his father and his uncle than about himself.

The similarities among the different creations are constantly impressed on the reader's mind. They all seem to share the quality of not being quite what their creators intended. In a sense Elizabeth Shandy's fruitless trip to London is a "loss" of the baby Tristram and even when he is born, fate does not take too kindly to him. Tristram

and his misfortunes foreshadow all the other creations. Walter Shandy's hypotheses are effectively disproven by actual happenings and the time element of his *Tristra-paedia* is all wrong. Trim's story of the king of Bohemia never even gets a chance to be told. Tristram's composition suffers from missing chapters and a supposedly unable writer. Yorick's sermon gains fame for him only after his death. Even Uncle Toby's re-created world on the bowling green which seems to have been preserved from any disaster is prematurely stopped by the Treaty of Utrecht.

Sigurd Burkhardt points to Uncle Toby's bowling green as the parabolic equivalent of Tristram's story of his life. Tristram does in words what Uncle Toby does as a sculptor of sorts in his bowling green with the pliable and unambiguous medium of clay and sod:⁷ A misunderstanding occurs over the word "bridge" in the story because Uncle Toby thinks it refers to his creation, the re-enactment of military wars on his bowling green, when it actually refers to Walter Shandy's creation, the baby Tristram. One can even stretch the meaning of "bridge" to refer to Tristram's created work in the light of Sigurd Burkhardt's view of the common element in bridges and story-lines: both are designed to get something across, whether it be people or ideas.⁸

Tristram further emphasizes the similarities already shared by the creations within the story proper through his use of language. He utilizes sexual imagery to describe Uncle Toby's bowling green because of the element of creation involved in it:

Never did lover post down to a belov'd mistress with more heat and

expectation, than my uncle Toby did, to enjoy this self-same thing in private; - - I say in private; - - for it was sheltered from a house, as I told you, by a tall yew hedge, and was covered on the other three sides, from mortal sight, by rough holly and thickset flowering shrubs; - - so that the idea of not being seen, did not a little contribute to the idea of pleasure pre-conceived in my uncle Toby's mind.

(II, v, 98-9)

Having linked Uncle Toby's creation to Walter Shandy's creation of Tristram through similar imagery, Tristram uses the same technique in connecting Walter Shandy's creation of hypotheses to Uncle Toby's bowling green as he describes Walter Shandy's handling of hypotheses thus: Accordingly he held fast by 'em, both by teeth and claws, - - would fly to whatever he could lay his hands on, - - and in a word, would intrench and fortify them round with as many circumvallations and breastworks, as my uncle Toby would a citadel.

(III, xxxiv, 223)

There seems to be a therapeutic effect inherent in the process of creation partially glimpsed in the treatment of Phutatorius' wound with paper that has just come off the press, re-created experience in words. Walter Shandy consoles himself on the death of Bobby with his histrionic lamentation. It becomes more evident in the story of Uncle Toby who first buys himself a map of Namur because "it might be a means of giving him ease" (II, i, 83). A causal relationship exists between Uncle Toby's hobby-horse and his renewed interest in life after four years of illness due to the wound in his groin. As he gets involved in research work that allows him to create on his bowling green, he also gets physically better.

The life-giving quality of the process of creation set off by the slight incapacities of the people in Tristram Shandy who involve themselves in it is emphasized by Tristram in his use of sexual imagery. One feels that Walter Shandy considers his translation of

books on noses as effective in making up for his lack of virility in the same way that Uncle Toby's collection of books on military architecture and his re-creation of them on the bowling green assuage his disappointment over his own disabled personal architecture.

This living quality which gives the element of reality to creations is fittingly best portrayed by Sterne in the re-creation of experiences through words for after all, this is Tristram's main concern as a writer. At the same time that Sterne ~~and~~ Tristram constantly demonstrate that words cannot truly represent life, the novel contains various situations that posit the belief that words constitute a reality of their own. When Phutatorius is burnt by the chestnut in his private parts, he is advised to wrap paper just off the press around the hurt area but warned that the paper should not contain any bawdry. The implied similarity between reality and its re-creation in words would make such an application dangerous.

Just as Uncle Toby's re-created world on his bowling green provides him with a reality that adds significance to his life, experience re-created in words also holds its own kind of significance. Trim finds himself reacting so violently to his own reading of Yorick's sermon that Walter Shandy has to continue it for him:

"Observe the last movement of that horrid engine!" [I would rather face a cannon, quoth Trim, stamping.] - - "See what convulsions it has thrown him into! - - Consider the nature of the posture in which he now lies stretched - - what exquisite tortures he endures by it!" - - [I hope 'tis not in Portugal.] - - "'Tis all nature can bear! Good God! see how it keeps his weary soul hanging upon his trembling lips!" [I would not read another line of it, quoth Trim, for all this world; - - I fear, an' please your Honours, all this is in Portugal, where my poor brother Tom is. I tell thee, Trim, again, quoth my father, 'tis not an historical account, - - 'tis a description.

(II, xvii, 139)

Trim's reaction to Yorick's sermon within the story-line sets the pattern for the type of reaction that Tristram expects from his reader. The structural format of the novel is oftentimes dependent on imaginary conversations that take place between them, Tristram requiring from the reader the same kind of active participation that Trim brings to the sermon-reading.

The reality of experience re-created in words is further confirmed by the circumstances that follow Bobby's death; the kitchen staff is moved to tears not by the actual death but by Trim's oration on it. Even Tristram's complaints about his story going too fast or too slow for his comfort attest to the life in words embodying experience, a life just as difficult to control and predict as his own.

Tristram's composition is a re-creation, an attempt to recapture and to relive his life and opinions through words. Re-creating experience is essentially a reflexive action that aids the re-creator and other people to understand not only the finished re-creation or the process of re-creating but also the original of the re-creation. Once more situational evidence is given throughout the work to point to this. It is in Uncle Toby's re-enactment of military events that he understands their significance. Similarly Walter Shandy is able to understand Uncle Toby's desire to get well and his sorrow on the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht only after Uncle Toby words out his emotions in two beautiful outbursts. Trim's re-creation of Bobby's death in words renders the reality more comprehensible to the kitchen staff. And the most important action

underlying the book, the writer writing a work of art, seems to have been undertaken by Laurence Sterne in a desire to understand the process better and to analyze it by re-creating it through the vehicle of Tristram Shandy the artist.

From the intricate structure that arises when the different processes of re-creation taking place within the novel are examined can be observed similar strains that link them together. The whole set-up reveals Laurence Sterne's conscious design in utilizing Tristram Shandy as an artist in operation involved in a work that reveals more about his art than he pretends it does.

CHAPTER III

TRISTRAM SHANDY AND THE WRITER'S MEDIUM

In chapter twelve of Volume II, Walter Shandy insults Uncle Toby's hobby-horse and Tristram describes his uncle's reaction:

Pray, Sir, what said he? - - How did he behave? - - O, Sir! - - it was great: For as soon as my father had done insulting his HOBBY-HORSE, - - he turned his head, without the least emotion, from Dr. Slop, to whom he was addressing his discourse, and look'd up into my father's face, with a countenance spread over with so much good nature; - - so placid; - - so fraternal; - - so inexpressibly tender towards him; - - it penetrated my father to his heart: He rose up hastily from his chair, and seizing hold of both my uncle Toby's hands as he spoke: - - Brother Toby, said he, - - I beg thy pardon; - - forgive, I pray thee, this rash humour which my mother gave me.

(II, xii, 115)

Verbal conflicts between Walter Shandy and Uncle Toby are always resolved through non-verbal ways, the communication of gestures, looks and touches, implying the inability inherent in words to be perfect vessels of communication. But words are the tools of a writer and together with Tristram's realization of their imperfection is the acknowledgement that language is the medium of his art. The artist uses words to represent life so that in effect his work of art is a statement in language of how he sees language in relation to life. The statement becomes more meaningful and involved in the case of Tristram, for in Stedmond's words, language for Tristram is not merely raw material which he as artist must shape; it is also a problem to be analyzed and discussed, a character in its own right, both subject and object, telling the story and being told about.¹ Throughout Tristram Shandy we see Tristram, the self-conscious artist, examining language,

embodying its qualities and limitations in recurring images, characters, events and in the very structure of his work.

Walter Shandy's observation that his son Tristram "should neither think nor act like any other man's child" (I, iii, 6) can very well refer to Tristram's unique attitude towards language, an attitude understandably peculiar to the son of Walter Shandy and the nephew of Uncle Toby. He partakes of the eccentricities of both men and within these eccentricities puts forth his own perspective on language. Inheriting certain aspects of his attitude towards language from his father and his uncle, Tristram enlarges them and develops his own theories on words, theories that determine his narrative.

His inheritance from Uncle Toby is directly related to Uncle Toby's seeing people and events as fraught with military significance. Perhaps no aspect of Uncle Toby's personality is more impressed on the reader's mind than the military. His thoughts center around it and happenings usually lead him back to memories of his military experiences or to ideas that refer to his small-scale military exploits on his bowling-green:

- - In the year, one thousand seven hundred and eighteen, when this happened, it was extremely difficult; so that when my uncle Toby discovered the transverse zig-zaggery of my father's approaches towards it, it instantly brought into his mind those he had done duty in, before the gate of St. Nicholas; - - the idea of which drew off his attention so entirely from the subject in debate, that he had got his right hand to the bell to ring up Trim, to go and fetch his map of Namur, and his compasses and sector along with it, to measure the returning angles of the traverses of that attack, - - but particularly of that one, where he received his wound upon his groin.

(III, iv, 159-60)

When a mix-up occurs because Dr. Slop insists that the mid-wife come down to him in recognition of his authority, Uncle Toby comes up with, "I like subordination . . . and but for it, after the reduction

of Lisle, I know not what might have become of the garrison of Ghent, in the mutiny for bread, in the year Ten" (III, xiii, 184).

In conversations words register in Uncle Toby's mind according to their relation to his hobby-horse, his mind reacting only to words which have a military significance and in a conversation with Walter Shandy, the characteristic trend of Uncle Toby's thought is illustrated: "Now, whether we observe it or no, continued my father, in every sound man's head, there is a regular succession of ideas of one sort or other, which follow each other in train just like - - A train of artillery? said my uncle Toby" (III, xviii, 190-91). In another instance Tristram writes, "As Yorick pronounced the word point blank, my uncle Toby rose up to say something upon projectiles" (IV, xxvi, 317). Again Tristram notes, "But the word siege, like a talismanic power, in my father's metaphor, wafting back my uncle Toby's fancy, quick as a note could follow the touch, - - he open'd his ears" (III, xli, 239).

To understand words Uncle Toby insists on seeing them in the specific context of his hobby-horse. In a sense this action of his is a miniature of Tristram's conscious use of words to exploit their sexual implications. He too involves himself in yoking words to the specific context of his hobby-horse, his vocation as an artist, the mental process of creation being best exemplified in the physical.

Uncle Toby valiantly attempts to refine words through experience, to be totally sure of a word's meaning by being secure in the knowledge of its corresponding experience. When Tristram describes him as having an "inward cleanliness of mind and fancy" (I, xxi, 66-67),

the phrase seems to point to his outlook on words, the way he regards them and understands them in their pure essence, at face value -- or rather at military value. When words that are beyond Uncle Toby's comprehension impinge on his consciousness, he resorts to whistling *Lillabullero*. It is his way of blocking out sound (for words unless rendered meaningful through a person's understanding of them are just sounds) with sound that he can at least enjoy.

In the very one-trackmindedness of Uncle Toby is contained a virtue that Tristram upholds when he inveighs against the "cold unmetaphorical vein of infamous writing" (IX, xiii, 615-15). Uncle Toby translates situations into words of military significance so he can understand them more easily with the explanation, "I like the comparison . . . better than the thing itself" (IX, viii, 609). He re-enacts the actual events of war on his bowling green and derives pleasure from this re-enactment. There is a bit of the writer's mind in Uncle Toby's facilitating his apprehension of the world through his dependence on comparisons and re-enactments, through his use of metaphor.

Like the writer he uses metaphors to simplify and clarify situations and people, to make them easier to grasp and understand. He relies greatly on relating new and unexperienced events to events which he has known and experienced. Thus Uncle Toby sees almost everything as a military metaphor and this becomes evident in the language he uses. In a conversation with Dr. Slop he talks of Tristram's skull in terms of a granado. Love is also expressed in war terminology. Mrs. Wadman "has left a ball here -- added my uncle Toby -- pointing to his breast" (VIII, xxviii, 581). Tristram is very conscious of his

uncle's vocabulary and he naughtily describes, "Take the dash away, and write Backside, - - 'tis Bawdy. - - Scratch Backside out, and put Cover'd-way in, - 'tis a Metaphor; - - and, I dare say, as fortification ran so much in my uncle Toby's head, that if he had been left to have added one word to the sentence, - - that word was it" (II, vi, 100-1). The situations in the novel serve to support Uncle Toby's metaphorical world, for when the Widow Wadman decides to attack him with her charms, she chooses the sentry-box for their first dangerous encounter.

In describing Uncle Toby's affairs, Tristram borrows freely from Uncle Toby's vocabulary, a technique he also uses with Walter Shandy, indicating the flexibility of Tristram's own sense of language and his recognition of the power of language to define each character more emphatically. Thus he prefaces his treatise on the eye of Widow Wadman with a comparison of the eye to a cannon:

An eye is for all the world exactly like a cannon, in this respect; That it is not so much the eye or the cannon, in themselves, as it is the carriage of the eye -- and the carriage of the cannon, by which both the one and the other are enabled to do so much execution.

(VIII, xxv, 577)

Again in the description of Uncle Toby's first visit to the Widow Wadman he recounts:

When my uncle Toby and the Corporal had marched down to the bottom of the avenue, they recollected their business lay the other way; so they faced about and marched up streight to Mrs. Wadman's door.

I warrant your honour; said the Corporal, touching his Monterocap with his hand, as he passed him in order to give a knock at the door - - My uncle Toby, contrary to his invariable way of treating his faithful servant, said nothing good or bad: the truth was, he had not altogether marshal'd his ideas; he wish'd for another conference.

(IX, xvi, 619)

He refers to Uncle Toby's visits as "attacks" and describes the progress of his suit accordingly:

My uncle Toby and the Corporal had gone on separately with their operations the greatest part of the campaign, and as effectually cut off from all communications of what either the one or the other had been doing, as if they had been separated from each other by the Maes or the Sambre.

(IX, xxx, 641)

Because Trim shares Uncle Toby's hobby-horse, he too is described in military terms. Tristram uses the expression, "he contented himself with turning his part of the siege into a blockade" (III, xxiv, 209), to refer to Trim's refusal to visit Bridget out of loyalty to his master after the disastrous Widow Wadman affair and his contenting himself with keeping other possible suitors off.

Tristram's imitation of Uncle Toby in his use of military metaphors also points to a similarity between the two that is first brought out by Tristram in his description of the beginnings of Uncle Toby's hobby-horse. During Uncle Toby's convalescence in Walter Shandy's home in London his physical difficulties are aggravated by the difficulties he encounters in telling the story of his wound intelligibly, "giving such clear ideas of the differences and distinctions between the scarp and counterscarp, - - the glacis and covered way, - - the half-moon and ravelin, - - as to make his company fully comprehend where and what he was about" (II, i, 82). His problem, Tristram explicates, is the problem of the writer too, the problem of definitions, essentially the problem of words that causes Tristram to conclude "what little knowledge is got by mere words" (IX, xx, 624).

Circumstances in Uncle Toby's life highlight the importance of definition. Only when he is able to define and recount the happenings that cause the wound in his groin with the help of maps and other visual materials is he able to regain his health. It is not surprising

then that he, having experienced the crippling perplexities that arise from undefined words, from then on decides to stick closely to just one frame of reference for all his words, to exert effort to make sure that the words he uses have counterparts in reality easily intelligible to him. For the Widow Wadman, the affair of Uncle Toby revolves crucially around the definition of the word recovery:

- - He is recovered, Doctor Slop would say - -
 What! quite?
 - - Quite: madam - -
 But what do you mean by a recovery? Mrs. Wadman would say.
 Doctor Slop was the worst man alive at definitions; and so Mrs. Wadman could get no knowledge: in short, there was no way to extract it, but from my uncle Toby himself.

(IX, xxvi, 637)

For Uncle Toby the affair of the Widow Wadman ends when Trim helps him discover that the Widow Wadman's concerned curiosity about his wound and the circumstances surrounding it is not a result of what Uncle Toby defines as her virtue of "humanity" (IX, xxxi, 642). Even the story of the proposal of Trim's brother, included in the amours of Uncle Toby, attests to the importance of definition. Trim's brother finds the task of proposing considerably easier with the help of the embarrassing but nevertheless illustrative presence of sausages in the shop.

Definitions are important to Uncle Toby in terms of the movement of his life; definitions are important to Tristram in terms of his vocation as an artist and the movement of his story. He is fully conscious of the levels of meanings a word can have, as in the various interpretations set off in the minds of the hearers at the sound of Phutatorius' Zounds. He also recognizes the possibility of the use of multiple words to refer to the same experience/situation, as when he

says, "Tis known by the name of perseverance in a good cause, - - and of obstinacy in a bad one" (I, xvii, 43). In his dealing with words, Tristram displays his virtuosity as an artist.

Like Uncle Toby Tristram is conscious of the confusion that can arise from words that sprout different meanings, but unlike Uncle Toby he welcomes precisely this element of his medium. Just as Uncle Toby finds it a delight to be able to move around the different objects that make up a town in his bowling-green into different positions so that he can build up different towns, Tristram Shandy also finds it a delight to work with words that refer to more than one object. Indeed Tristram, though he complains of "the unsteady uses of words which have perplexed the clearest and most exalted understandings" (II, iii, 86), nevertheless illustrates that it is through this flexibility that words are best able to contain and communicate experience.

Tristram focuses attention on the multi-faceted quality of words in his presentation of the difficulties of his craft. Several times during his novel when he comes to particularly crucial words, he takes time out to define them. But his definitions of them seem to emphasize the possible turns of meaning they can have rather than to limit neatly the reader's impression of them. In the case of "knots", Tristram explains:

In the case of knots, - - by which, in the first place, I would not be understood to mean slip-knots, - - because in the course of my life and opinions, - - my opinions concerning them will come in more properly when I mention the catastrophe of my great uncle Mr. Hammond Shandy, . . . nor, secondly, in this place, do I mean that particular species of knots, called bow-knots; . . . But by the knots I am speaking of, may it please your reverences to believe, that I mean good, honest, devilish tight, hard knots, made bona fide, as Obadiah made his.

(III, x, 167-68)

"Nose" is another tricky term for Tristram because of its sexual connotations and he obviously enjoys its trickiness as he warns:

I define a nose, as follows, - - intreating only beforehand, and beseeching my readers, both male and female, of what age, complexion, and condition soever, for the love of God and their own souls, to guard against the temptations and suggestions of the devil, and suffer him by no art or wile to put any other ideas into their minds, than what I put into my definition. - - For by the word Nose, throughout all this long chapter of noses, and in every other part of my work, where the word Nose occurs, - - I declare, by that word I mean a Nose, and nothing more, or less.

(III, xxxi, 218)

Fittingly enough definitions come into play once more in the recounting of Uncle Toby's amours when Tristram announces that he will refrain from giving a definition of love and several chapters later, still avoiding the task of defining, merely goes down the alphabet giving an adjective describing love for each letter. Tristram recognizes the futility of limiting words with definitions and when he discusses its difficulties, the discussion seems to be more in a spirit of opening a word to different meanings rather than tying it down to a definite one.

Instead of being hampered by the instability of words, Tristram overcomes the limitation by exploiting it. There is a constant sometimes perverse delight on Tristram's part to exploit words, to make use of all their connotations and display that words must have texture to embody experience fully. Thus the reader is given leeway, in spite of Tristram's warning or indeed because of it, to see more than a nose in his definition of a nose and to realize how the idea of a nose as synonymous with the male organ, the source of physical creativity, functions effectively in the context of the novel as an account of a creating artist.

Whereas Uncle Toby would refrain from using words which might be misinterpreted, Tristram puts such words to good use. William Bowman Piper illustrates how Tristram masterfully exploits equivocal terms so that they gain more than one meaning, the second usually bawdy. He depends greatly on vague, general terms, empty expressions such as "means", "matters", "kinds of bodies" and "affairs". The vaguer and more general a word is, the more useful it is to Tristram's equivocation so that words like "part", "things", and "it" become indispensable to his art. There are of course the ready-made equivocal terms from tradition like "horn-works", "green-gowns", "old hats", "spouts", "whiskers" and others.²

Uncle Toby is not the only source of Tristram's attitude towards words. Walter Shandy is an even more powerful influence, and some of Tristram's passages parallel the trend of thought of his father. Traces of the systematic Walter Shandy can be found in Tristram's words: Thus it is, by slow steps of casual increase, that our knowledge physical, metaphysical, physiological, polemical, nautical, mathematical, aenigmatical, technical, biographical, romantical, chemical, and obstetrical, with fifty other branches of it, (most of 'em ending, as these do, in ical) have, for these two last centuries and more, gradually been creeping upwards towards that AKUN of their perfections, from which, if we may form a conjecture from the advances of these last seven years, we cannot possibly be far off.

(I, xxi, 64)

Revealing Walter Shandy to be a great believer in systems, most of his thought can be traced to the Elizabethan attitude towards the world and cosmic order, as described in E. M. W. Tillyard's The Elizabethan World Picture.³ His mathematical mind easily responds to the idea of a world picture of an ordered universe arranged in a fixed system of hierarchies with close interconnections, the movement of one usually

influencing the movement of another. At the height of the chaos that takes place on the day of Tristram's birth, Walter Shandy cries out with a statement that illustrates this:

- - Confusion! cried my father, (getting up upon his legs a second time) - - not one single thing has gone right this day! had I faith in astrology, brother, (which by the bye, my father had) I would have sworn some retrograde planet was hanging over this unfortunate house of mine, and turning every individual thing in it out of its place.

(III, xxiii, 206)

In another instance he compares the bad effect of too many people going off to London with the blood and spirits all rushing to the human head, resulting in the cessation of circulation and the eventual death of the nation and the person. Whereas Uncle Toby utilizes metaphors to clarify his perception of situations and events, simplifying them by referring them to his military frame of reference, Walter Shandy, in his delight with words, goes in the opposite direction. His metaphors amplify the original situation and expand it to acquire universal implications.

Tristram uses military metaphors to describe Uncle Toby's affairs and in the same manner, uses metaphors typical of Walter Shandy to describe his affairs. Thus he says:

My aunt Dinah's affair was a matter of as much consequence to him, as the retrogradation of the planets to Copernicus: - - The backslidings of Venus in her orbit fortified the Copernican system, - call'd so after his name; and the backslidings of my aunt Dinah in her orbit, did the same service in establishing my father's system, which, I trust, will for ever hereafter be call'd the Shandean System, after his.

(I, xxi, 68)

The design of Tristram Shandy can very well be attributed to Walter Shandy's mind because of the existence of corresponding

levels in it and the careful working out of these levels to parallel each other and expand each other's scope. The physical creative act illustrating the mental creative act, the characters mirroring Tristram in his role as writer and creator: the hidden order in Tristram Shandy can perhaps be worded out as neatly as one of Walter Shandy's hypotheses.

Whereas Tristram merely implies the similarity between Uncle Toby and the writer in their common difficulty with words, his presentation of Walter Shandy as a writer is more pronounced. He explicitly comments on his father's task, "Like all other writers, he met with disappointments" (V, xvi, 373). The writer in Walter Shandy produces several works: a dissertation on the name Tristram, a translation of Slawkenbergius' tales, and a treatise on education, the *Tristram-paedia*. Perhaps the connecting line between Tristram the writer and Walter Shandy the writer can be best drawn from a common attitude towards words.

If Uncle Toby can be at ease only when words stand still in his mind and do not fly off into various levels of meaning to form incomprehensible ideas, Walter Shandy stands at the opposite extreme. Words cannot stand still in Walter Shandy's mind:

— 'Certainly,' he would say to himself, over and over again, ' the woman could not be deceived herself; — if she could, — what weakness!' — tormenting word! which led his imagination a thorny dance, and, before all was over, play'd the duce and all with him; — for sure as ever the word weakness was uttered, and struck full upon his brain, — so sure it set him upon running divisions upon how many kinds of weaknesses there were; — that there was such a thing as weakness of the body, — as well as weakness of the mind, — and then he would do nothing but syllogize within himself for a stage or two together, How far the cause of all these vexations might, or might not, have arisen out of himself.

(I, xvi, 42)

Walter Shandy is very aware of the power of words, and his awareness accounts for his great attraction to theories and hypotheses. He approaches life the way Ernulphus approaches cursing, Ernulphus who kept swearing forms "ever by him on the chimney piece, within his reach, ready for use" (III, x, 169). Walter Shandy too keeps handy theories and hypotheses on life that he has derived from his head "ever by him on the chimney piece, within his reach, ready for use", totally willing to put his faith in the ability of words to control reality. He even considers names as "potent determinants"⁴ of a person's future and in his formulation of the North-West passage to the intellectual world posits the premise that the ability to master auxiliary verbs is the best gauge of intelligence.

A staunch believer in words, he enjoys working with them and getting involved in lengthy discussions such as the one on Tristram's christening when the effectiveness of particular words is questioned:

Gastripheres, for example, continued Kysarcius, baptizes a child of John Stradling's in Gomine gatris, &c. &c. instead of in Nomine patris &c. - - Is this a baptism? No, - - say the ablest canonists; inasmuch as the radix of each word is hereby torn up, and the sense and meaning of them removed and changed quite to another object; for Gomine does not signify a name, nor gatris a father.

(IV, xxix, 326-27)

Walter Shandy gives the job of mating a favorite mare with a beautiful Arabian horse to Obadiah but through some carelessness of Obadiah, the mating results in an ugly mule. Elizabeth Shandy and Uncle Toby expect that Obadiah will get a terrible sermon from Walter but a chance to display his wit makes Walter forget all about it: See here! you rascal, cried my father, pointing to the mule, what

you have done! - - It was not me, said Obadiah. - - How do I know that? replied my father.

Triumph swam in my father's eyes, at the repartee - - the Attic salt brought water into them - - and so Obadiah heard no more about it.

(V, iii, 353)

His fascination for words and his respect for their power point to the writer in his personality and explain why he sees as an "eternal source of misery" the fact that his wife:

contented herself with doing all that her godfathers and godmothers promised for her - - but no more; and so would go on using a hard word twenty years together - - and replying to it too, if it was a verb, in all its moods and tenses, without giving herself any trouble to enquire about it.

(IX, xi, 613)

Tristram brings out the similarity between himself and his father in his constant imitation of him in a spirit not of parody but of a shared vocation. Following the characteristic action of Walter Shandy to refer to authorities even in matters like breeches, Tristram also insists on giving primary sources, like the document between his parents about lying-in in London. Both have a fondness for scholarly jargon and one critic notes how this technique which Tristram actually inherits from his father proves useful in endowing the ticklish subjects Tristram delights in treating with a sufficiently sterile air. Thus Tristram clothes obscene items in such terms as "Argumentum Tripodium", "Argumentum ad Rem", and "a posteriori" from the language of rhetoric and such as "phimosis", "evacuations", "repletions", "non-naturals", "os pobis", and "coendix" from the language of medicine.

5

A description of the movement of Tristram's mind parallels an earlier description of Walter Shandy's: Tristram says, "What these

perplexities of my uncle Toby were, - - 'tis impossible for you to guess; - - if you could, - - I should blush; not as a relation, - - not as a man, - - nor even as a woman, - - but I should blush as an author" (I, xxv, 80), and Walter Shandy argues "like a christian, - - like a heathen, - - like a husband, - - like a father, - - like a patriot, - - like a man" (I, xviii, 48). Tristram's naming of Uncle Toby's defensive whistling as Argumentum Fistulatorium and classifying it as part of the treasury of Ars Logica is in keeping with Walter Shandy's great reverence for erudition.

That Tristram like Walter Shandy is a firm believer in the power of words to control life is brought out when the words he uses to describe the Widow Wadman's eye nearly make him fall in love with it:

- - it was not, Madam, a rolling eye - - a romping or a wanton one - - nor was it an eye sparkling - - petulant or imperious - - of high claims and terrifying exactions, which would have curdled at once that milk of human nature; of which my uncle Toby was made up - - but 'twas an eye full of gentle salutations - - and soft responses - - speaking - - not like the trumpet of some ill-made organ, in which many an eye I talk to, holds coarse converse - - but whispering soft - - like the last low accents of an expiring saint - - 'How can you live comfortless, captain Shandy, and alone, without a bosom to lean you⁸ head on - - or trust your cares to?'

It was an eye - -

But I shall be in love with it myself, if I say another word about it.

(VIII, xxv, 578)

Griffin points out Tristram's exhibition of the incantatory power of words in his tale of the two French words that move horses.⁶

Almost all of Walter Shandy's theories and neat formulas are disproven by actual happenings, but this does not prevent him from creating even more theories and formulas. In a sense he espouses verbal reality strongly enough to insist on the validity of the word-structures he creates even though they seldom coincide perfectly with

actual reality. In total agreement with his father with regards to the reality words can have on their own, Tristram efficiently describes the town of Calais, of which he admits, "I know no more . . . (except the little my barber told me of it, as he was whetting his razor) than I do this moment of Grand Cairo" (VII, 1v, 483).

In a passage quoted earlier in the chapter regarding the movement of the word "weakness" in Walter Shandy's mind another quality of words perceived by Walter and Tristram Shandy is brought out. In contrast to Elizabeth Shandy who uses words that are twenty years old, her husband and her son both believe in the life that is innate in words, a quality of life that makes words gather meaning like a snowball, grow in dimension and engender other words, in the same way that Walter Shandy's auxiliary verbs, once set into motion, engender ideas and aid directly in the development of a person's intelligence, as Walter Shandy himself illustrates:

every word . . . is converted into a thesis or an hypothesis; - - every thesis and hypothesis have an offspring of propositions; - - and each proposition has its own consequences and conclusions; every one of which leads the mind on again, into fresh tracks of enquiries and doubttings.

(VI, ii, 409)

To stress this living quality of words Tristram presents the image of words as people in his statement, "only 'tis an undercraft of good authors to keep up a good understanding amongst words, as politicians do amongst men" (VII, xix, 502). The book Bruscambille he presents as a woman when he says about Walter Shandy, "When my father got home, he solaced himself with Bruscambille after the manner, in which, 'tis ten to one, your worship solaced yourself with your first mistress,

-- that is, from morning even unto night" (III, xxxv, 225). Tristram's metaphors are alive as language is alive and he imagines his reader taking his metaphors literally. One instance is when he presents his characters in terms of their hobby-horse. Walter Shandy's difficulties in getting his handkerchief from the bottom of his opposite coat pocket remind Uncle Toby of the zig-zag approaches towards the gate of St. Nicholas and Walter Shandy is peeved:

My father knit his brows, and as he knit them, all the blood in his body seemed to rush up into his face -- my uncle Toby dismounted immediately.

-- I did not apprehend your uncle Toby was o'horseback. -- (III, iii, 160)

The situational context of the story also serves as sufficient evidence of the live quality of words and the consequent power they exert. Toby's inability to handle words effectively renders his life physically and mentally miserable, but the minute he overcomes it, the mastery he gains over words that have military significance imbues him with a renewed interest in life. The tragedy of Yorick is linked closely with language. Tristram introduces Yorick's story with the comparison of the mortgager and mortgagee to the jester and jestee, suggesting that as interest accrues to the first relationship, a kind of interest also accrues to the latter. Eugenius warns Yorick, "'Tis no extravagant arithmetic to say, that for every ten jokes, -- thou hast got a hundred enemies; and till thou hast gone on, and raised a swarm of wasps about thy ears, and art half stung to death by them, thou wilt never be convinced it is so" (I, xii, 29). Words by nature do not remain stagnant; on the contrary they grow and develop like a swarm of wasps, flying out in all directions, powerful and vital.

The "aliveness" of language that compounds its difficulty as a medium is faced valiantly by Tristram. Indeed he displays that words must be alive to approximate competently human experience. Unlike the mediums of the painter or the sculptor, the medium of the writer Tristram, the medium of words, is in constant daily usage by people and Tristram, instead of resenting this or ignoring it, shows that common usage impregnates his medium with life, and his acute consciousness of this also determines the kind of relationship he has with the reader.

Words are never stale for Tristram and his manipulation of them constantly emphasizes this. With some inherited traits from his father and his uncle and some that are unique to him, Tristram proceeds to create a work in language that brings attention to the role of language as a writer's medium.

Perhaps the most evident stylistic device that Tristram uses in his presentation and use of language as alive and multi-dimensional is that of metaphor, which Walter Shandy, "a dear searcher into comparison" (IV, xiv, 287), refers to as "the highest stretch of improvement a single word is capable of" (V, xlvi, 405). Henri Fluchère gives a short analysis of metaphor in Tristram Shandy, defining metaphor as an enlargement of the possibilities of expression, imposing on the writer the necessity of interpreting the world and thus of adopting an attitude, capturing in a flash the hidden relationships between things, images and ideas that may be tenuous, bizarre, even farcical or merely arbitrarily projected by the mind itself. Each metaphor enriches the life of the mind by condemning habit, creating

new relations and realizing a vision. Tristram, conscious of this power, defends metaphors, while Walter Shandy with his hypotheses (which are actually metaphors designed to besiege the truth) moves about in a tangle of metaphors. Mrs. Shandy is permanently impervious to metaphor, while Uncle Toby lives in his own metaphorical world in which words special to him have a 'talismanic' power without which his life would lose its meaning and its savor.⁷

That metaphor enriches the life of a word is illustrated most significantly in the case of Uncle Toby, for whom words would have minimal meaning unless seen in the metaphorical context of the military. Tristram, a true nephew of Uncle Toby, also banks heavily on the use of metaphor and simile. Like Uncle Toby his primary reason seems to be clarification and simplification. As he says in the first volume, he intends to add a map and other pieces and developments to his novel: not to swell the work, - - I detest the thought of such a thing; - - but by way of commentary, scholium, illustration, and key to such passages, incidents, or inuendos as shall be thought to be either of private interpretation, or of dark and doubtful meaning.

(I, xiii, 36)

Outside the realm of language Tristram relies on hand pointers, marbled or black pages, typographical eccentricities like italics, gothic type or capital letters, even a small illustration of the movement of his work, to focus attention on particular details which will prove helpful for the reader's understanding of his work. Within the realm of language he turns to metaphors and similes for clarification, asking the reader to imagine wit and judgement as the two knobs on his chair or comparing his work to a "cold eternal winter" without the "sunshine" of digressions (I, xxii, 73).

Figurative language is also a way of showing the inherent life in words, an indicator of the relationships words can develop among themselves. Tristram's sensitivity to the figurative element of words is partly evident in his description of people in terms of their hobby-horses, a parallel of Uncle Toby's seeing people and their actions in terms of the military. In one instance Uncle Toby and Trim get carried away re-enacting an attack and Tristram recounts:

My father was returned from his walk to the fish-pond -- and opened the parlour-door in the very height of the attack, just as my Uncle Toby was marching up the glacis -- Trim recovered his arms -- never was my uncle Toby caught riding at such a desperate rate in his life!

(IV, xix, 295)

He presents his own vocation as an artist as his hobby-horse:

WHAT a rate have I gone on at, curveting and frisking it away, two up and two down for four volumes together, without looking once behind, or even on one side of me, to see whom I trod upon! -- I'll tread upon no one, -- quoth I to myself when I mounted -- I'll take a good rattling gallop; but I'll not hurt the poorest jack-ass upon the road -- So off I set -- up one lane -- down another, through this turn-pike -- over that, as if the arch-jockey of jockeys had got behind me.

(IV, xx, 298)

Following this metaphor even his presentation of his problems as a writer is consistent, picturing his indecision about what direction to take in terms of a traveler reaching a point where three roads branch out and searching for a guide-post in the center of them to direct him what road he is to take.

Tristram's metaphors, like his Uncle Toby's, simplify matters for the easier apprehension of them by the reader but at the same time, amplify like his father's, so that his composition acquires dimension. Thus his story of his conception enlarges to include his conception in words of his actual conception. He deals with the physical

creative act in such a way that it expands itself and grows into the mental creative act. When he speaks of the difficulties of finding himself describing two journeys at the same time, the two journeys are part of actual reality but at the same time point to his journey as a writer.

Eugene Hnatko makes a study of the metaphorical relationships in Tristram Shandy, which he discovers range from full extended parallels to condensed metaphors. Among the expected one finds life as a road, insults as wasp stings, a son as a staff of one's old age, learning as a crop, science as a fountain, knowledge as a labyrinth, the mind as a weaver, thinking as weighing, dispute as warfare, troubles as rain, a smile as sunshine, the mind as a storehouse, tears as dew, piles of baggage as mountains, passions as a tide, a body as a fortress and others. Tristram brings new life to these rather expected and decorous comparisons by the method of extension from the mere addition of a further quality perhaps overlooked in the analogy to a full development often to a point of ambiguity and even bawdry.⁸ Tristram's extension of metaphors confirms his relationship to his father.

What Eugene Hnatko sees as fully characterizing Tristram's creation is the repetition of dominant metaphors that bring about a structural unity: the metaphor of music, painting and the theater; the procreation theme; and the hobby-horse figure. Of the recurrent similitudes the two most often resorted to are those centering on the journey and those about military action. Some forty similitudes come from the nexus of journey, road, travel - usually by hobbyhorse -

and there are outright allusions to them and the narrated journeys of Walter Shandy, Yorick, Slawkenbergius' hero and Tristram himself. The military metaphors number around sixty, used mainly by Uncle Toby and associated with him, but also by Walter Shandy, Yorick and Tristram. The third largest subject for metaphor is connected with obstetrics and physiology.⁹ Their use of metaphor defines the personalities of Walter Shandy and Uncle Toby in the same way that Tristram's use of metaphors defines not only his personality as a writer but the structure of the work he produces.

Closely related to, perhaps even identical with, Tristram's use of metaphor is his calculated use of double meanings and puns, an offshoot of his recognition of the plasticity of his medium and the capacity of words to contain a variety of meanings. In France Tristram loses his remarks only to find them twisted round the curls of the wife of the chaise-vamper. He asks for them and:

Tenez -- said she -- so without any idea of the nature of my suffering, she took them from her curls, and put them gravely one by one into my hat -- one was twisted this way -- another twisted that -- ay! by my faith; and when they are published, quoth I, --
They will be worse twisted still.

(VII, xxxviii, 531)

In the same volume he discusses how he will make his plain stories interesting by turning the plain into a city filled with people.

Walter Shandy consciously plays with double meanings when he teases Trim and Uncle Toby about the bridge that is destroyed on the bowling green after a rendezvous there of Trim and Bridget. He would "exhaust all the stores of his eloquence" in a panegyric upon the battering rams of the ancient, the vinea of Alexander, the

catapultae of the Syrians and others, ending with the question, "But what are these . . . to the destructive machinery of corporal Trim?

-- Believe me, brother Toby, no bridge, or bastion, or sally port that ever was constructed in this world, can hold against such artillery" (III, xxiv, 211). The same "bridge" eventually gains tragic proportions for Walter Shandy when it expands its meaning to include the bridge of Tristram's nose.

Double meanings are tricky but Tristram never hesitates to use them. Like Uncle Toby the words he uses must be lodged in reality but similarly, in the manner of his father, he lets words develop into more than one level, lets them grow so that under his creative eye, they expand in meaning, a process he indulges in in the following use of "noses" and "heat":

Not any one of these was more diverting, I say, in this whimsical theatre of ours, -- than what frequently arose out of this self-same chapter of long noses, -- especially when my father's imagination was heated with the enquiry, and nothing would serve him but to heat my uncle Toby's too.

(III, xxxix, 236)

In Volume II Tristram writes:

The truest respect which you can give to the reader's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself.

For my own part, I am eternally paying him compliments of this kind, and do all that lies in my power to keep his imagination as busy as my own.

(II, xi, 109)

The reader's imagination is kept busy by having to be attuned to Tristram's wilful use of words that sprout meanings and allusions and expand in dimension.

Tristram's use of double meanings becomes particularly dominant in reference to sex. At times he pretends to be like Walter

Shandy, who suffers from the rapid expansion of the word "bridge", when he complains that the reader is reading too much into the terms he uses. Certainly his subject matter by itself verges on what should not be mentioned. The moment of his conception begins the book and the midwife and Dr. Slop the obstetrician as minor characters merely confirm the strong sexual element in the novel. But if the reader insists on seeing double levels of meaning in words like "whiskers" and "noses", an opposite parallel vision of double levels must take place when he reads about the conception and delivery of Tristram. He is to realize the significance of these words in the physical and material context as Uncle Toby prescribes, but to do full justice to Tristram, he must also Walter Shandy it a bit and see how sexually-charged words and incidents can expand themselves into the dimension of creativity on the intellectual level.

Various other aspects of his attitude to words which are not directly related to his heritage from Uncle Toby and Walter Shandy are revealed by Tristram. The importance of a word is driven home to the reader by Tristram when he insists that the reader reread the previous chapter because she missed the crucial word in a sentence that determined the sentence's meaning. "It was necessary I should be born before I was christen'd" (I, xx, 57), he says and the word "necessary" reveals that his mother was not a papist.

Words are versatile for Tristram and he is understandably aware of the variety of uses they can be put to. William Piper sets forth an examination of the different words that Tristram utilizes to mean the power of chance, a long list including "circumstances",

"fortune", "accident", "destiny", "luck", the "Fates", "ungracious Duchess", "cross-purposes", "cross-reckonings", "Tide of little evils and distresses" and "jerks and hard jostlings".¹⁰

To emphasize better perhaps the "aliveness" of language, Tristram plays with language by turning nouns into verbs, thus injecting more movement into his style. Eugene Hnatko points out two examples: Elizabeth Shandy "could not heroine it" and the discussion on breeches is "pro'd and conn'd" between the Shandy couple.¹¹ Tristram also reveals a sensitivity to the sound of words, describing his name as "Melancholy dissyllable of sound!" (I, xix, 56), or "wife" as having a "shrill, penetrating sound of itself" (V, v, 357). Phutatorius' "Zounds" of course becomes the classic example as Tristram describes it:

One or two who had very nice ears, and could distinguish the expression and mixture of the two tones as plainly as a third or a fifth, or any other chord in musick - - were the most puzzled and perplexed with it - - the concord was good in itself - - but then 'twas quite out of the key,

(IV, xxvii, 318)

This sensitivity to sound probably explains why most of Tristram's coined verbs are sound ones: "My father pish'd and pugh'd at first most terribly" (III, xxxii, 229) and "my father travelled homewards, as I told you, in none of the best moods, - - pshaw-ing and pish-ing all the way down" (I, xvii, 43).

Language grows too in the form of new words that Tristram creates whenever he sees the need for them. Among others he produces "be-virtu'd, ~ be-pictur'd - be-butterflied" (II, iii, 88), "out-gone" (II, xiv, 117) and "scientintically" (III, v, 162). Responsive to the demands of his craft, he experiments with his medium to serve

it best.

Tristram Shandy in his role as a self-conscious artist functions in the novel as both user and examiner of words. The resulting work is an embodiment of his attitude towards language, the analytic even if jocular pose of an artist towards his medium partially determining the plot, characters and structural quality of Tristram Shandy.

CHAPTER IV

TRISTRAM SHANDY AND THE READER

A study of how Tristram Shandy solicits his reader's attention has been made by William Bowman Piper with the following conclusions. Soliciting this attention on almost every page of his novel, Tristram makes general addresses to "my good people" or "readers" and often speaks more selectively to "Madam", "Sir", "My Dear Girl", and "Your Worships and Reverences". His addresses to them are various: he prays for their attention or their reliance on his powers; he assures them of his sincerity and his concern for them; he kisses their hands, teases them or scolds them; he even entices them to read on with constant promises.¹

Tristram never lets the reader alone. He calls on him when he is opening a particularly difficult or peculiar element of his story, especially when he must suspend it or explain some details or fill in the background. Once or twice he has even asked him for advice on the narrative and assistance in his task as writer. He addresses his opinions accordingly: those on home and family to Madam, those on literature and philosophy to Sir, and those on conduct to them both. Tristram's concern for his reader's interest and approval allows the reader to interrupt him, whether it be to reprove him for his bawdry or to complain of difficulties in following the story.²

Exactly why the reader is such an important element in

Tristram Shandy, practically assuming the role of one of the novel's characters, is a problem which when understood renders the structure of the whole novel more meaningful too. Since the structure of Tristram Shandy can be studied through the relationships that emerge from parallel actions recurring in the novel, a clue to the problem can perhaps be glimpsed in the account of Uncle Toby, Trim and Trim's story of the king of Bohemia. Uncle Toby agrees to listen to Trim's story "provided it is not a merry one" with the explanation that "to such, Trim, a man should ever bring one half of the entertainment along with him; and the disposition I am in at present would wrong both thee, Trim, and thy story" (VIII, xix, 559). Uncle Toby's observation can very well be enlarged to serve as a basis of Tristram Shandy's concept of the author-reader relationship for his novel.

Henri Fluchère speaks of the object of Tristram Shandy as being the establishment of a personal relationship of thought and emotion between the author and his reader, founded on a constant common element of reason, sensibility and taste that make mutual comprehension possible.³ Indeed Tristram predicts in the sixth chapter of his first volume; "As you proceed further with me, the slight acquaintance which is now beginning betwixt us, will grow into familiarity; and that, unless one of us is in fault, will terminate in friendship" (I, vii, 11).

This intent to have a friendship develop between him and the reader acts as a determinant in the kind of style that comes from Tristram's pen, a style which William Piper describes as widely

recognized as conversational through the use of such words as "say", "speak", "mention" and "tell". Piper points to the movement of Tristram Shandy as another evidence of the conversational style. Laurence Sterne makes Tristram seem like a conversationalist by pushing him headlong through the story so that Tristram is unable to revise and is sometimes unsure whether or not he has already told something. Time hurries Tristram in the way it would naturally hurry a talker and not a writer: things crowd in on him so fast that he does not know which to tell first, and he feels strongly that he may never get to everything. At times he is too rushed to verify his sources and references, finding that the time he has set aside for his whole book or for a simple digression is slipping away.⁴

The sense of immediacy that comes from Tristram's writing about himself as a writer in his first encounter with his material strongly supports the conversational tone. So too does Tristram's affected indecision every so often about what his chapter should deal with or what direction his story should take at a certain point. Even the famous Shandean dash, as illustrated by manuscripts of A Sentimental Journey in the British Museum, ^{which} was meticulously made by Sterne to vary in length depending on the length of the pause desired⁵, provides a punctuation mark competently suited for conversation. Lacking the finality of a period, which more or less presupposes a well-constructed, neatly balanced sentence, the dash adjusts to the flightiness of Tristram's mind, giving the desired air of informality, allowing Tristram to write down his thoughts as they enter his mind seemingly without having ordered them previously, so that the reader gets

the full impact of Tristram's words as they are, unrehearsed and unrevised. Such is his reaction to his unexpected circumcision when he says:

— 'Twas nothing, — I did not lose two drops of blood by it — 'twas not worth calling in a surgeon, had he lived next door to us — thousands suffer by choice, what I did by accident. — Doctor Slop made ten times more of it, than there was occasion: — some men rise, by the art of hanging great weights upon small wires, — and I am this day (August the 10, 1761) paying part of the price of this man's reputation.

(V, xvii, 376)

The conversational tone of Tristram Shandy revolves very simply around the question-answer situation which Tristram utilizes to plunge the reader into the very story-line of his work, starting in the very first chapter with the question he attributes to the reader, "Pray, what was your father saying?" (I, ii, 5). If the reader is allowed to ask Tristram questions, the reverse is also true and Tristram, to further the reader's involvement in his work, also directs questions to him so that he asks, "So long as a man rides his HOBBY-HORSE peaceably and quietly along the King's highway, and neither compels you or me to get up behind him, — pray, Sir, what have either you or I to do with it?" (I, vii, 13). Throughout the novel the reader is faithfully remembered and brought into the work by Tristram, becomes an indispensable element of Tristram's work, and, in Uncle Toby's words, brings "half the entertainment" with him, a procedure perfectly understandable in the context of Tristram's definition of writing as "but a different name for conversation: As no one, who knows what he is about in good company, would venture to talk all; — so no author, who understands the just boundaries of decorum and good breeding, would

presume to think all" (II, xi, 108-9).

The story of Uncle Toby, Trim and the tale of the king of Bohemia is not the only situational evidence given in the novel to support Tristram's belief in the constant conversation, the lively give and take that must take place between the author and his audience. Yorick's sermon cannot be read completely through but must be interrupted at times to make space for the listeners' reactions to it, Dr. Slop reacting mainly to the contents with statements like "All this is impossible with us . . . the case could not happen in our church" (II, xvii, 128-29), and Walter Shandy reacting to the style as he pronounces, "The language is good" (II, xvii, 126). After the sermon reading Walter Shandy judges Trim's own sympathetic reaction to the sermon as the prime reason for his excellent reading of it. The reading of the Tristram-paedia also elicits immediate and various responses, even inspiring Uncle Toby to tell the story of the siege of Limerick. The power of a listener's reaction is however nowhere as evident as in the story of the king of Bohemia where Uncle Toby's uncontrolled reactions abort the story and cause Trim to say a day later, "We lost it, an' please your honour, somehow betwixt us" (VIII, xxviii, 581).

Walter Shandy, Uncle Toby, Trim, Yorick and Dr. Slop present different masks of the reader and through them Laurence Sterne through the persona of Tristram constantly stresses the power of the reader as a determining factor in the effecting^{ve} rendering of any created work as representative of the entire work of Tristram's life and opinions. This great reliance on an active, participating

reader rather than a passive entity can be partly attributed to Tristram's concept of words. Tristram uses words in all their figurative splendor, indulging in metaphors, puns and double meanings. The danger in the use of figurative language is that like an unsuccessful joke, it can fall flat on the ears of an unperceptive reader and become stale. Tristram Shandy to ensure the best kind of response to his work has to train the reader to develop a sensitivity to his language. Only when the reader welcomes this task of self-development can Tristram be assured that his language is acquiring the depth and dimension which he intended it to have : and which can only grow in the consciousness of a perceptive reader. Tristram is telling the truth when he says that he is eternally paying the truest respect which an author can give to a reader's understanding - - that is, keeping the reader's imagination as busy as his own. In typical Shandaick manner he alerts the reader to the possibility of words sprouting meanings while seemingly warning him of such dangers, carefully defining words while actually desiring the reader to be conscious of their various meanings. The matter of noses is perhaps the best example as he guides the reader and says:

Now don't let Satan, my dear girl, in this chapter, take advantage of any one spot of rising-ground to get astride of your imagination, if you can any ways help it; or if he is so nimble as to slip on, - - let me beg of you, like an unback'd filly, to frisk it, to squirt it, to jump it, to rear it, to bound it, - - and to kick it, with long kicks and short kicks, till like Tickletoby's mare, you break a strap or a crupper, and throw his worship into the dirt.

(III, xxxvi, 226)

Tristram's constant anticipation of the reader's reactions reveals his belief in the reader as an active thinking agent. He

introduces Walter Shandy's treatise on Christian names with the fear that: the reader, when I come to mention it to him, if he is the least of a cholerick temper, will immediately throw the book by; if mercurial, he will laugh most heartily at it; - and if he is of a grave and saturnine cast, he will, at first sight, absolutely condemn as fanciful and extravagant.

(I, xix, 50)

Several times he tells the reader that only he, Tristram, knows what is going to happen and that it is futile for the reader to set up expectations, thus presuming that the reader is indeed setting them up. The reader's ready involvement in the story also leads Tristram to imbue his work with a certain amount of suspense, dangling particularly juicy stories to whet the reader's appetite, expecting him to react with eager anticipation.

Just as Tristram's use of language demands an intelligent, active reader, so too does the theme of his work. The presence of a participating reader is necessary to Tristram's pose of a self-conscious artist. In his desire to open his craft to the reader he must make sure that he is getting the message across and sees a steady conversation between him and the reader as the best assurance. From the outset he displays his great consciousness of the reader and forewarns him of the ensuing close author-reader relationship, making the reader an essential part of his work with the statement:

I Know there are readers in the world, as well as many other good people in it, who are no readers at all, - - who find themselves ill at ease, unless they are let into the whole secret from first to last, of every thing which concerns you.

It is in pure compliance with this humour of theirs, and from a backwardness in my nature to disappoint any one soul living, that I have been so very particular already. As my life and opinions are likely to make some noise in the world, and if I conjecture right, will take in all ranks, professions and denominations of men

whatever . . . I find it necessary to consult every one a little in his turn.

(I, iv, 7)

From then on the writer's craft is exposed by Tristram to the reader through the question-answer structure he imposes on his work, attributing to the reader the inquisitiveness and the readiness to react that characterize Walter Shandy, Trim and Uncle Toby. The greatly felt presence of the reader in the work serves as an excuse, a valid structural device for Tristram's conscious drawing of attention to the elements of his craft as he illustrates the different facets of his vocation. Giving the reader permission to skip part of a chapter written "only for the curious and inquisitive" (I, iv, 8), he hints at the writer's task of selecting his material, and in the same chapter, when he allows the reader to ask him a question regarding his father's activities during December, January and February, actually points to the writer's duty to write with clarity. The reader's query, "I did not apprehend your uncle Toby was o'horseback" (III, iii, 160), after Tristram's description of him in terms of his hobby-horse focuses attention on his use of figurative language to express his material better. Even the movement of his story is stopped every so often with Tristram's questions to the reader like "are you to imagine from thence, that I shall set out with a description of what love is?" (VI, xxxvi, 466) to make the reader conscious of the placement of incidents within the story and how one episode brings on another.

Still in the spirit of exposing his craft to his reader, he even presents the task of writing as a joint effort between the two

of them. Asking the critic to help him take Uncle Toby and Walter Shandy off the stairs, he rewards him with a crown for his trouble. Neither does he hesitate to say "I Beg the reader will assist me here, to wheel off my uncle Toby's ordnance behind the scenes" (VI, xxix, 455). Perhaps Tristram's conception of the task of writing as a cooperative effort comes from his recognition of the element of control that he exerts over the reader and that the reader exerts over him. A corresponding give and take relationship existing in the conversation between the author and the reader also exists in the matter of control between them.

Tristram sees the task of reading as an active one, where the reader is willing to cooperate with the author, involve himself in the story, and exert a questioning mind that will respond to orders of Tristram such as, "Lay down the book, and I will allow you half a day to give a probable guess at the grounds of this procedure" (I, x, 17). He asks the reader to look into *Saxo-Grammaticus'* David history to ascertain a particular fact because he himself has no time for it. He presumes that the critic will drop a tear after he has solicited sympathy from him for Uncle Toby's perplexities. When Madam has been inattentive in her task, he scolds her and orders her to reread the previous chapter and not be guilty of developing a vicious taste that lusts after adventure and not erudition. When he starts dealing with a dangerously bawdy subject however he asks Madam "to read on as fast as she can" (I, xxiii, 76).

Tristram's presupposition that the reader's willingness to read his book indicates a corresponding willingness to react to it properly gives him reason to say in the sixth volume that if the reader is still

unable to imagine Uncle Toby's bowling green, it is his own fault. Sometimes he actually takes time to guide the reader's imagination step by step:

Let the reader imagine then, that Dr. Slop has told his tale; - - and in what words, and with what aggravations his fancy chooses: - - Let him suppose, that Obadiah has told his tale also, and with such rueful looks of affected concern, as he thinks will best contrast the two figures as they stand by each other: - - Let him imagine, that my father has stepp'd up stairs to see my mother: - - And, to conclude this work of imagination, - - let him imagine the doctor wash'd, - - rubb'd down, - - condoled with, - - felicitated, - - got into a pair of Obadiah's pumps, stepping forwards towards the door, upon the very point of entring upon action.

(II, xi, 109)

When Dr. Slop enters the scene in Volume II, a detailed description of him is given:

Imagine to yourself a little, squat, uncourtly figure of a Doctor Slop, of about four feet and a half perpendicular height, with a breadth of back, and a sesquipedality of belly, which might have done honour to a serjeant in the horseguards.

(II, ix, 104)

In Volume VI however he seems to have more confidence in the reader when he tells him to draw his own picture of the Widow Wadman. In fact in Volume IX when talking of Uncle Toby's breeches he teasingly controls Madam's intemperate imagination with the admonition, "Let us govern our fancies" (IX, ii, 62).

Tristram expects the reader's mind to be active and intelligent, two qualities that actually act as a controlling factor of Tristram's art. If Tristram seems to delight in his power of ordering the reader around, he also reveals the even more striking power that the reader holds over him. Superficially this is brought out by Tristram's posing for permission before he proceeds with certain parts of

his work. He begs the reader to allow him to tell the beginnings of Uncle Toby's hobby-horse. Before he tells the tale of Slawkenbergius, he does the same thing. In another instance he politely asks, "Will your worships give me leave to squeeze in a story between these two pages?" (V, iii, 351). When he feels he has done wrong, carrying himself in "such fanciful guise of careless disport" (IV, xxii, 301), he immediately writes out an apology.

An intelligent and able reader serves to curtail any possible desire of Tristram to present a slipshod work. Tristram cannot get away with anything he wants because of the overwhelming presence of the reader. Once he puts a sudden end to a chapter for fear of boring him and at another time greatly relieves the mind of Madam with a courteous "Don't be terrified, madam, this stair-case conversation is not so long as the last" (IV, xxx, 331). Hoping to be an efficient writer he clarifies for the reader the difference between his father's ass and his hobby-horse. He also promises never to take advantage of the reader through the "fortune of the pen" (VII, vi, 486), and in line with this promise, allows the impatient reader to read a particular chapter at his leisure, if he chooses to, and also describes an incident when he realizes that it is "vain to leave this to the Reader's imagination" because it would only "cudgel his brains sore" (V, xviii, 377). He even helps him along in an understanding of the different characters by telling him what to expect of each, as in the case of his father:

As many pictures as have been given of my father, how like him soever in different airs and attitudes, - - not one, or all of them, can ever help the reader to any kind of preconception of how my father would think,

speak, or act, upon any untried occasion or occurrence of life. -- There was that infinitude of oddities in him, and of chances along with it, by which handle he would take a thing, -- it baffled, Sir, all calculations.

(V, xxiv, 382)

Elements of his craft also have to be explained to a sensitive reader and the matter of structure is laid in full view of the reader's scrutiny by Tristram. He explains his digressions and their effect on the movement of the novel, rationalizes his skipping of a chapter on the grounds of the harmony that must exist among chapters and talks of the principle of time discrepancy involved in his art while narrating the Phutatorius episode:

Though this has taken up some time in the narrative, it took up little more time in the transaction, than just to allow time for Phutatorius to draw forth the chestnut, and throw it down with violence upon the floor -- and for Yorick, to rise from his chair, and pick the chestnut up.

(IV, xxvii, 322)

The reader thus acquires a position in the novel that is unconventionally influential, and he feels his power especially when Tristram has to go out of his way to settle his account with the reader and write down chapters he has promised him. The whims and fancies of the reader determine the movement of Tristram's narration of his story in the same way that the whims and fancies of the different characters within the story determine the movement of the story-line. The seriousness with which Tristram sees the role of the reader cannot be doubted even if he constantly plays jokes on him. He presumes that Madam suffers from an overimaginative mind with regards to sexual overtones in his work and naughtily teases her about it. He structures his composition in such a way that it reads like

a steady conversation between him and the reader, making the reader realize that he is important and integral to the work's form. The reader's pride in the recognition of his power in the work because of the constant communication between him and Tristram is, however, considerably dampened by Tristram's unexpected confession that "with an ass, I can commune forever" (VII, xxxii, 523).

Tristram's unique conception of the relationship that exists between author and reader results in the structural texture that Tristram Shandy has. A composition dealing with the theme of the artist, Tristram Shandy proceeds to enlarge on its theme by taking the reader into consideration too. Tristram Shandy does not allow the reader to be a passive receiver of his artistic composition but instead draws him into it, demonstrates that a reader's task is an active and responsive one. Unless the reader takes on this kind of task, the effectiveness of Tristram Shandy as a literary work of art is lessened and a complete understanding of the form of the novel cannot be reached. The relationship that Tristram Shandy builds up between him and the reader is demanded by the kind of work he produces.

An important aspect of the presentation of the artist in Tristram Shandy is the emphasis placed on the reader's role, the demonstration of the give and take relationship between author and reader. Tristram's other views on his craft together with this relationship serve as formative elements in his composition and work together to present the complete portrait of the artist in Tristram Shandy.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

¹All quotations from the text refer to James Work's edition.

²Price, To the Palace of Wisdom, 331, 336.

³Ricks, "The Novelist as Innovator: Laurence Sterne", Listener, LXXIII, 220.

⁴Baird, Holtz and Mendilow.

⁵Mendilow, "The Revolt of Sterne", in John Traugott, ed., Laurence Sterne, 99.

⁶Baird, "The Time-Scheme of Tristram Shandy and a Source", PMJA, LI, 803-20.

⁷Stout, "Some Borrowings in Sterne from Rabelais and Cervantes", English Language Notes, III, 111-118.

Chapter II

¹Sterne, Letters, 290.

²Ibid., 294.

³Towers, "Sterne's Cock and Bull Story", Journal of English Literary History, XXIV, 26.

⁴Burkhardt, "Tristram Shandy's Law of Gravity", Journal of English Literary History, XXVIII, 77.

⁵Van Ghent, The English Novel, 86.

⁶Ricks, "The Novelist as Innovator: Laurence Sterne", Listener, LXXIII, 219.

⁷Burkhardt, 74-75.

⁸Ibid., 80.

Chapter III

¹Stedmond, The Comic Art of Laurence Sterne, 46.

²Piper, Laurence Sterne, 72-73.

³Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture.

⁴Griffin, "Tristram Shandy and Language", College English, XXII, 109.

⁵Piper, 67.

⁶Griffin, 109

⁷Fluchère, Laurence Sterne: From Tristram to Yorick, 414.

⁸Hnatko, "Tristram Shandy's Wit", Journal of English and Germanic Philology, LXV, 53.

⁹Ibid., 54-56.

¹⁰Piper, 49.

¹¹Hnatko, 52.

Chapter IV

¹Piper, Laurence Sterne, 22.

²Ibid.

³Fluchère, Laurence Sterne: From Tristram to Yorick, 28.

⁴Piper, 23.

⁵Hafter, "Garrick and Tristram Shandy", Studies in English Literature, VII, 485.

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